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TERRORIST GROUP BRANDS: UNDERSTANDING TERRORIST GROUP STRATEGIES THROUGH BRAND EXPOSURE

by

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June 2016

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Much as commercial firms do, terrorist groups use branding to increase support and thus their capacity to conduct operations. This thesis introduces the new concept "terrorist brand exposure," as a reflection of effective brand management strategies and communications among terrorist groups. In that regard, this thesis seeks to merge two vastly different theories, brand theory and terrorism studies, into one package. The research involves a quantitative analysis of the terrorist brand exposure of Al Qaeda and the Islamic State in the news media published on the Internet between April 1, 2013, and December 31, 2015. The results of this thesis validate that terrorist groups can influence their brand exposure through violent terrorist actions and manage their brand strategies to differentiate themselves from other groups in the global competition for resources.

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TERRORIST GROUP BRANDS: UNDERSTANDING TERRORIST GROUP STRATEGIES THROUGH BRAND EXPOSURE

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

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ABSTRACT

Much as commercial firms do, terrorist groups use branding to increase support and thus their capacity to conduct operations. This thesis introduces the new concept "terrorist brand exposure," as a reflection of effective brand management strategies and communications among terrorist groups. In that regard, this thesis seeks to merge two vastly different theories, brand theory and terrorism studies, into one package. The research involves a quantitative analysis of the terrorist brand exposure of Al Qaeda and the Islamic State in the news media published on the Internet between April 1, 2013, and December 31, 2015. The results of this thesis validate that terrorist groups can influence their brand exposure through violent terrorist actions and manage their brand strategies to differentiate themselves from other groups in the global competition for resources.

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To my wife, Laura, who shoulders the mantle of being an Army spouse. You have hung with me through thick and thin. Your sacrifice often goes unnoticed outside of our home. Just know that I know, and I thank you. I have searched far and wide for “someone exactly like you…”

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I. INTRODUCTION

Over the last 15 years, Al Qaeda has been the front-runner in international terrorism. However, the rapid growth and expansion in 2013 of Al Qaeda's former franchise and now rival, the Islamic State, has garnered tremendous international media attention. This research shows the Islamic State's brand now far exceeds Al Qaeda's in global media coverage. Many scholars have sought to answer how the Islamic State as a franchise has managed to overtake and surpass Al Qaeda's leading status in the global terrorism market.[1] This research has developed a new way to quantify the global news market's attention toward terrorist groups by measuring "terrorist brand exposure." By measuring the brand exposure of these two groups, the findings reveal an interesting story of the brand strategy of the Islamic State, the struggle to differentiate from Al Qaeda, and the reason the group hit critical mass, what terrorism expert Brigitte Nacos terms mass-mediated terrorism.[2]

The use of propaganda by terrorist groups has been widely studied.[3] There is a vast body of literature on the strategies and capabilities of terrorist groups. These organizations market their brands in an effort to generate support in terms of both funding and recruits, which ultimately increase their capacity to conduct operations. To do so, they need to market their brands in the international arena by gaining media attention

1 Yigal Carmon, Yael Yehoshua and A. Leone, Understanding Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi and the Phenomenon of the Islamic Caliphate State (Washington, DC: Middle East Media Research Institute: Jihad & Terrorism Studies Project,2014). For further discussion of this problem, see Iain Edgar, "The Dreams of Islamic State," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 9, no. 4 (2015): Elliot Friedland, "Special Report: The Islamic State "(The Clarion Project, 2015): "Tobias Feakin and Benedict Wilkinson, The Future of Jihad: What Next for ISIL and Al-Qaeda?" (Australia: Australian Strategic Policy Institute- Strategic Insight, 2015). Graeme Wood, "What ISIS Really Wants," *The Atlantic*, March 2015: Daveed Gartenstein-Ross et al., "The War between the Islamic State and Al-Qaeda: Strategic Dimensions of a Patricidal Conflict "(Washington, DC: Valens Global, 2015).

2 Brigitte L. Nacos, *Mass-Mediated Terrorism: The Central Role of the Media in Terrorism and Counterterrorism*, 2nd ed. (Latham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2007).

3 Paul R. Baines and Nicholas J. O'Shaughnessy, "Al-Qaeda Messaging Evolution and Positioning, 1998–2008: Propaganda Analysis Revisited," *Public Relations Inquiry* 3, no. 2 (2014) 163–191.For further discussion of this problem, see Nicholas J. O'Shaughnessy and Paul R. Baines, "Selling Terror: The Symbolization and Positioning of Jihad," *Marketing Theory* 9, no. 2 (June 01, 2009), 227–241. doi:10.1177/1470593109103069.: Anthony Kubiak, "Spelling it Out: Narrative Typologies of Terror," *Studies in the Novel* 36, no. 3 (Fall, 2004), 294–301.

through symbolic terrorist attacks, commonly referred to as *propaganda of the deed*.[4] However, there has been little analysis of terrorist groups from the perspective of brand management. The commercial marketplace uses branding to differentiate the products of one company from another.[5] Scholars apply the term *brand* loosely and inconsistently within the terrorism literature.[6] However, few have tried to define terrorist brands in the context of how they evolve and what such brands may mean to different potential stakeholders.

This thesis seeks to measure the "chatter," which this research coins *terrorist brand exposure* in the news media, and submits this new term as a way to assess effective brand management strategies and communications among terrorist groups. In that regard, this thesis seeks to merge two vastly different theories, brand theory and terrorism studies, into one package. The research involves a quantitative analysis of the terrorist brand exposure of Al Qaeda and the Islamic State in the news media published on the Internet between April 1, 2013, and December 31, 2015. This methodology analyzes the aggregate number of times each group's brand name was mentioned, leading to a measure of brand exposure in the news media.

The results of this thesis validate the hypotheses that terrorist groups can influence their brand exposure through violent terrorist actions and develop proper brand strategies that differentiate themselves in the global competition for resources. The results also suggest successful that brand management focuses on credibility and authenticity by keeping promises and staying pure to the group's cause. The Islamic State struggled to

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4 Benjamin Acosta, "Live to Win another Day: Why Many Militant Organizations Survive Yet Few Succeed," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 37, no. 2 (2014): 135–161. doi:10.1080/1057610X.2014.862900. For further discussion of this problem, see Michael Freeman, "The Sources of Terrorist Financing: Theory and Typology," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 34, no. 6 (2011): 461–475. doi:10.1080/1057610X.2011.571193.; Clifford Bob, *The Marketing of Rebellion: Insurgents, Media, and International Activism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).; Benedict Wilkinson and J. Barclay, "The Language of Jihad: Narrative Responses and Strategies of Al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula and UK Responses" (London: The Royal United Services Institute, 2011).

5 Kevin Lane Keller, *Strategic Brand Management: Building, Measuring, and Managing Brand Equity*, 3rd ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2008). 2

6 For an example of the loose term of brand applied to terrorist groups, see Paul R. Baines et al., "The Dark Side of Political Marketing: Islamist Propaganda, Reversal Theory and British Muslims," *European Journal of Marketing* 44, no. 3 (2010): 478–495. doi:10.1108/03090561011020543.

differentiate itself from Al Qaeda, but the group stayed true to its core tenet of establishing an Islamic caliphate and kept its promise by capturing large population centers. Fundamentally different from traditional propaganda of the deed, the group's rapid defeat of Iraqi and Syrian forces in open warfare in 2014 brought additional credibility and reliability to the brand, which has enticed Muslims who are looking for such a homeland.

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II. BACKGROUND AND LITERATURE REVIEW

This research combines the two fully developed fields of brand theory and terrorism studies. In order to explore the intersection of these fields, the following background and literature review discusses brand theory, brand exposure, terrorism, and terrorist decision-making. In the process, this review also discusses terrorist groups—who they are, how they define themselves, how they target, and how brand principles apply to them. Then a brief overview of the Islamic State and Al Qaeda brands provides relevance to the quantitative evaluation of brand exposure for both groups.

A. COMMERCIAL BRANDING

Branding has been around for centuries as there has always been a need to differentiate the products of one producer from another.[7] Kevin Lane Keller, a leading scholar in brand theory, proposes that at the most basic level, branding is attaching a *label* (for identification) and *meaning* (for understanding) to a product, service, place, or organization. He explains, "Brands achieve a certain level of awareness and become linked to a set of associations in consumers' minds."[8] Brands represent the complete customer experience and play a role in determining the effectiveness of marketing.[9]

The term *brand* may be applied to many things such as tangible products, services, persons, places, or ideas. For consumers, brands simplify choice, reduce purchase risk, guarantee a certain level of quality, and build trust.[10] Today, we recognize the sleek white presentation of the Apple logo and think of high-quality, advanced technology devices. We recognize the Harley-Davidson logo and think of black leather jackets and free spirited adventure. While pouring a bowl of Kellogg's Frosted Flakes we

7 Keller, *Strategic Brand Management: Building, Measuring, and Managing Brand Equity*, 2

8 Kevin Lane Keller, "Branding Perspectives on Social Marketing," in *Association for Consumer Research* Volume 25, eds. Joseph W. Alba and Hutchinson J. Wesley., Vol. 25 (Provo, UT: Association for Consumer Research, 1998), 299–302.

9 Kevin Lane Keller and Donald R. Lehmann, "Brands and Branding: Research Findings and Future Priorities," *Marketing Science* 25, no. 6 (2006), 740–759. doi:10.1287/mksc.1050.0153.

10 Ibid.

think to ourselves the slogan from Tony the Tiger, "They're grrrrrrreat!" We recognize those names, recall their symbolic elements, and remember the products they bring to the market, such as the Apple iPhone. Each of these brands brings with it perceived added value to the product performance, trust, and reliability.[11]

Consumers also recognize people themselves as brands such as Tom Brady, Tiger Woods, Cal Ripken Jr., Kim Kardashian, Che Guevara, or Donald Trump. Arguably, Osama bin Laden also had a personal brand. To Sunni Muslims, he may have represented the pious lifestyle of the crusader defending Islam from impurity. To Westerners, Bin Laden's image is the first when think of terrorism. His name and image were also synonymous with the brand name of Al Qaeda, whose members under his authority perpetrated the 9/11 attacks in the United States and countless other attacks around the world.

Brand elements often include a brand name, slogan, logo, symbols or pictures, characters, spokespeople, packages, and signage.[12] In the commercial marketplace, brand elements include anything that can be trademarked and protected to prevent the brand

11 Keller, *Strategic Brand Management: Building, Measuring, and Managing Brand Equity*

12 For information on brand names and behavioral impacts, and cross cultural implications, see Richard R. Klink, "Creating Brand Names with Meaning: The use of Sound Symbolism," *Marketing Letters* 11, no. 1 (2000): 5–20.: Eric Yorkston and Geeta Menon, "A Sound Idea: Phonetic Effects of Brand Names on Consumer Judgments," *Journal of Consumer Research* 31, no. June (2004): 43–51. Shi Zhang and Bernd H. Schmitt, "Creating Local Brands in Multilingual International Markets," *Journal of Marketing Research* 38, no. August (2001): 313–325. Nader Tavassoli and Jin K. Han, "Auditory and Visual Brand Identifiers in Chinese and English," *Journal of International Marketing* 10, no. 2 (2002):13–28. Kevin Lane Keller, *Strategic Brand Management: Building, Measuring, and Managing Brand Equity*, 2nd ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ.: Prentice Hall, 2003). 145.Shi Zhang and Bernard H. Schmitt, "Activating Sound and Meaning: The Role of Language Proficiency in Bilingual Consumer Environments," *Journal of Consumer Research* 31, no. 1 (06, 2004): 220–228. For information on slogans, see *Keller, Strategic Brand Management: Building, Measuring, and Managing Brand Equity*. 160: Academic research rarely explored the impact on consumer behavior of logo design or other visual aspects of branding, however see Pamela W. Henderson, Joan L. Geise and Joseph A. Cote, "Impression Management using Typeface Design," *Journal of Marketing* 68, no. 4 (2004): 60–72. Chris Janiszewski and Tom Meyvis, "Effects of Brand Logo Complexity, Repetition, and Spacing on Processing Fluency and Judgment," *Journal of Consumer Research* 28, no. June (2001): 18–32. For information on packaging, see Valerie Folkes and Shashi Matta, "The Effect of Package Shape on Consumers' Judgments of Product Volume: Attention as a Mental Contaminant," *Journal of Consumer Research* 31, no. 2 (2004): 390–401. Brian Wansink and Koert Van Ittersum, "Bottoms Up! the Influence of Elongation on Pouring and Consumption Volume," *Journal of Consumer Research* 30, no. 3 (12, 2003): 455–463. Keller, *Strategic Brand Management: Building, Measuring, and Managing Brand Equity*

from being reproduced by competitors.[13] Christopher Pullig suggests that in choosing brand elements, a brand must consider "the degree to which they are memorable, meaningful, likable, transferable, adaptable, and protectable."[14] The latter two elements focus on protecting the brand, making it resilient under market conditions, and preventing infringement.[15]

There are three traits for evaluating a successful brand: positioning, credibility, and authenticity.[16] Positioning is the purposeful designing of an organization's offering and image to occupy a distinct place in the mind of a targeted consumer.[17] The term positioning references time and place in the minds of targeted consumers, so they remember the product at the right time to maximize the benefit of the brand. This is done by establishing points of parity and points of difference. Points of difference are what make the brand unique from the competition or the reason why a consumer should buy its product. Points of parity are similarities with competitor brands that negate the points of difference, resulting in a consumer with no reason not to purchase the brand. Successful positioning clarifies what the brand is about, how it is unique, what similarities are shared with the competition, and why consumers should purchase it.[18] Positioning provides direction for all marketing activities and defines what marketing should and should not do.[19]

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13 Ibid., 140. For further discussion of this problem, see Barbara Mueller, *Dynamics of International Advertising: Theoretical and Practical Perspectives*, 2nd ed. (New York, NY: Peter Lang, 2011).

14 Chris Pullig, "What is Brand Equity and What Does The Branding Concept Mean To You?" (Baylor University: Keller Center Research Report, 2008).

15 Ibid.

16 Michael B. Beverland, "Crafting Brand Authenticity: The Case of Luxury Wines," *Journal of Management Studies* 42, no. 5 (07, 2005): 1003–1029. doi:10.1111/j.1467-6486.2005.00530.x. Beverland uses differentiation instead of positioning, however positioning is the more developed and comprehensive evaluation of a product

17 Phillip Kotler and Kevin Lane Keller, *Marketing Management*, 12th ed. ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 2006). As referenced in: Keller, *Strategic Brand Management: Building, Measuring, and Managing Brand Equity* 98

18 Keller, *Strategic Brand Management: Building, Measuring, and Managing Brand Equity*, 97–132

19 Keller and Lehmann, Brands and Branding: Research Findings and Future Priorities, 740–759

Credibility references the product's ability to gain the trust and loyalty of the target audience and as a result, generate consumer loyalty. Credibility can be enhanced by keeping promises made to the consumer. Authenticity, a related concept, is the ability to stay true to the core principles of the brand, as well as relevant. One key principle of authenticity is executing what the organization or individual says it is going to do.[20]

Getting the brand out in the information domain is critical to consumer accessibility, in other words, the increased probability your targeted consumer will interact with the brand elements. A key element of any successful brand strategy is increasing the awareness of the brand in the mind of the consumer. Repeated interactions increase the awareness and salience of the brand.[21] Therefore, the more consumers are exposed to a brand, the greater their ability will be to recall and recognize the brand—and the greater the likelihood they will choose that brand over others.[22] This research focuses on one component of the brand awareness calculation, terrorist brand exposure, which will be elaborated in the following paragraphs.

There has been tremendous research focused on how consumer brand awareness affects behavior and future purchasing.[23] Brand awareness is the measure of accessibility to the brand in the mind. Brand awareness is measured by conducting studies consisting of surveys and focus groups to measure two critical sub-attributes, recognition and recall

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20 Beverland, Crafting Brand Authenticity: The Case of Luxury Wines, 1003–1029. See also; Jonathan Matusitz, Symbolism in Terrorism: Motivation, Communication, and Behavior (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014): 239-241

21 David A. Aaker, "Measuring Brand Equity Across Products and Markets," *California Management Review* 38, no. 3 (Spring, 1996): 102–120.

22 Keller, *Strategic Brand Management: Building, Measuring, and Managing Brand Equity*; For further discussion of this problem, see Pullig, "What is Brand Equity and what does the Branding Concept Mean to You?": Leo Bogart and Charles Lehman, "What Makes a Brand Name Familiar?" *Journal of Marketing Research* 10, no. 1 (Feb., 1973): 17–22. Aaker, Measuring Brand Equity Across Products and Markets, 102–120. Gráinne M. Fitzsimons, Tanya L. Chartrand and Gavan J. Fitzsimons, "Automatic Effects of Brand Exposure on Motivated Behavior: How Apple Makes You "Think Different," *Journal of Consumer Research* 35, no. 1 (2008): 21–35.

23 Keller and Lehmann, Brands and Branding: Research Findings and Future Priorities, 740–759. For further discussion, see Fitzsimons, Chartrand and Fitzsimons, Automatic Effects of Brand Exposure on Motivated Behavior: How Apple Makes You "Think Different," 21–35. Lawrence D. Gibson, "Not Recall," *Journal of Advertising Research* 23, no. 1 (Feb, 1983): 39–46. Larry Percy and John R. Rossiter, "A Model of Brand Awareness and Brand Attitude Advertising Strategies," *Psychology and Marketing* 9, no. 4 (1992): 263–274. doi:10.1002/mar.4220090402.

(see Figure 1). The aggregate of all responses gives a researcher a proportion of consumers who know of the brand. Recall demonstrates the ability of the respondent to remember the brand when prompted by a certain category of products, such as *cars*, or fulfillment of a need, such as *transportation*. Recognition is the ability of the consumer to remember specific prior *exposure* to the brand.[24]

The commercial market increases the awareness of the brand by increasing the different marketing methods and opportunities for the consumer to interact with the brand. A brand accomplishes this by purchasing targeted advertising space in various information channels like television or print media based on the results of brand awareness studies. Because marketers accomplish this by purchasing available advertising space, marketers typically pay little interest in the obvious step that must precede recognition and recall, which is brand exposure. To achieve brand awareness, the consumer must first be exposed to the brand elements (see Figure 1). To increase brand awareness, the marketer must increase the number of times the consumer interacts with those brand elements. The quantity of times the brand is available at any given moment is called brand exposure.[25] The greater the brand is *exposed*, or available for viewing over a period of time, the greater the probability the consumer will see the brand.[26] This type of exposure goes beyond planned and paid advertisements, extending to those who discuss a brand in the media through forums such as newscasts or reviews of a product in a magazine.[27]

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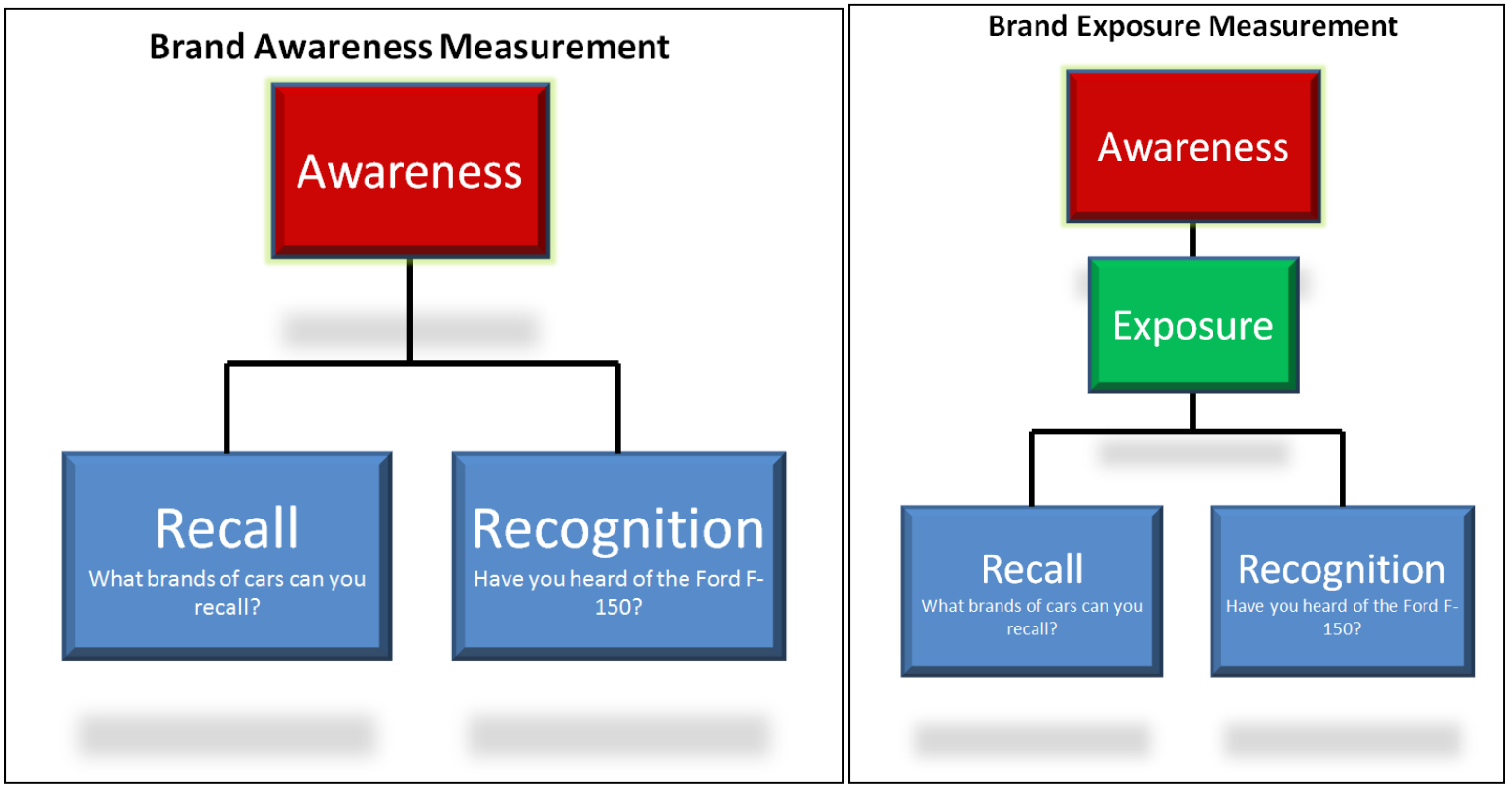
24 Keller, *Strategic Brand Management: Building, Measuring, and Managing Brand Equity* 374–375

25 Exposure definition: Exposure is defined by the American Marketing Association as "Any opportunity for a reader, viewer, or listener to see and/or hear an advertising message in a particular media vehicle." The AMA is the premier and only marketing professionals association, and forms the professional community with content from peer reviewed professional and academic journals. American Marketing Association (AMA). (updated November 2014) "Exposure: Definition." https://www.ama.org/resources/Pages/Dictionary.aspx?dLetter=E :"Exposure: Definition," ; Keller, Strategic Brand Management: Building, Measuring, and Managing Brand Equity

26 American Marketing Association (AMA), Exposure: Definition

27 Keller, *Strategic Brand Management: Building, Measuring, and Managing Brand Equity*

Figure 1. Brand Exposure Measurement Precedes the Measurement for Recall and Recognition



The author produced these diagrams for clarity by adapting the information provided by Keller, Strategic Brand Management: Building, Measuring, and Managing Brand Equity, and David A. Aaker, "Measuring Brand Equity Across Products and Markets," *California Management Review* 38, no. 3 (Spring 1996): 102–120

Brand exposure is the critical measurement in terrorism branding. Corporate marketers pay little attention to exposure because there is no mystery to the numbers. They know exactly how much advertising they have purchased, and the results of the studies indicate how much more and what types they need to purchase in the future. Terrorists do not have the luxury of purchasing advertising and news media coverage. They must compel the news media to cover their group by conducting terrorist attacks. Until now, there has not been a way to measure how effective terrorist-group operations have been at increasing brand exposure. Commercial marketing firms have the financial resources to conduct extensive brand awareness studies.

Studies have shown a link between multiple brand exposures and automatic influence on behavior. The brain becomes conditioned to the response when it is exposed to certain stimuli such as words, pictures, situations, or a combination thereof. The response to the stimuli is stored and activated later when exposed to the same or similar stimuli. Marketing, therefore, reinforces the consumer's previous thoughts about a brand, which become stronger with each repeated exposure. Exposure to similar brands may connect with the pre-conditioned response, causing the consumer to subconsciously connect one brand with another. For instance, if consumers experience positive thoughts surrounding the Mercedes Benz brand, they will think positively about Mercedes when exposed again to the brand or to similar brands, such as BMW, in the same product and quality category.[28] Conversely, in the context of terrorism, if potential recruits are conditioned to think positively about Al Qaeda, they will respond positively not only to Al Qaeda when exposed to the brand but also to other jihadist organizations similar to Al Qaeda. There is also a link among conditioning, repeated exposure, and brand choice. With the proper conditioning to stimuli, merely being exposed to a brand may be enough

28 Fitzsimons, Chartrand and Fitzsimons, Automatic Effects of Brand Exposure on Motivated Behavior: How Apple Makes You "Think Different," 21–35. William E. Baker, "When can Affective Conditioning and Mere Exposure Directly Influence Brand Choice?" *Journal of Advertising* 28, no. 4 (Winter, 1999): 31–46. S. Adam Brasel and James Gips, "Red Bull "Gives You Wings" for Better Or Worse: A Double-Edged Impact of Brand Exposure on Consumer Performance," *Journal of Consumer Psychology* 21, no. 1 (1, 2011): 57–64. doi:10.1016/j.jcps.2010.09.008.

for a consumer to choose the brand at the point of purchase.[29] Brand exposure is an undervalued portion of brand theory yet plays a critical role in the brand awareness of a terrorist group.[30] This is an area of study not explored.

Scholars accept the idea that brand exposure goes beyond an advertising campaign mix of television, radio, and Internet advertisements but includes the unplanned buzz or chatter generated by the broader public via news and social media.[31] Marketers control brand exposure through paid advertisements and a combination of marketing strategies; however, they cannot control the chatter created by the news and social media. The news media in this research comprises the professional news agencies that also propagate journalistic publications via the Internet. Increasing brand exposure is a method for increasing brand awareness and, thus, a brand's value.[32] This thesis limits data sources to news stories accessible on the Internet but excludes social media. Terrorist brand exposure should include all measures across information platforms, so future research should incorporate such methods.

B. TERRORIST GROUPS AND BRANDING

Terrorism and terrorist groups have been defined in many ways, and the debate continues. The debate centers on the lack of a consensus. This thesis uses the definition by renowned terrorism scholar Gordon McCormick, who defines terrorism as the "deliberate use of symbolic violence or threat of violence against non-combatants for political purposes."[33] Terrorist groups are defined as subnational political organizations that employ terrorism.[34] It is important to note that many insurgent groups may fit into the definition of terrorist groups while fewer terrorist groups fall into the definition of

29 Baker, When can Affective Conditioning and Mere Exposure Directly Influence Brand Choice?, 31–46.

30 Bob, *The Marketing of Rebellion: Insurgents, Media, and International Activism.*

31 Keller and Lehmann, Brands and Branding: Research Findings and Future Priorities, 740–759.

32 Bogart and Lehman, What Makes a Brand Name Familiar?, 17–22.

33 Gordon H. McCormick, "Terrorist Decision Making," *Annual Review of Political Science* 6 (2003):473–507. doi:10.1146/annurev.polisci.6.121901.085601.

34 Brian J. Phillips, "What is a Terrorist Group? Conceptual Issues and Empirical Implications," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 27, no. 2 (2015): 225–242. doi:10.1080/09546553.2013.800048.

insurgents. However, the distinction between these groups is irrelevant in the context of brand exposure. Because insurgent and terrorist groups seek to increase their brand exposure, for the purposes of this research, they both fall under the category of terrorist groups.

Terrorist groups commonly utilize mass communications in order to reach stakeholders domestically and internationally. These armed groups seek to inform stakeholders of who they are, who they are not, what they stand for, and how they are different. They seek to communicate the vision and end state of their cause as well as how stakeholders may contribute to their operations. From a brand management perspective, this is a positioning strategy. They must differentiate themselves from other groups that seek similar objectives and use similar narratives while competing for scarce resources. Terrorist groups must gain the attention of the world, galvanize support, and frame their causes in a manner that resonates broadly.[35] Terrorists typically communicate three ways: first, the act of violence itself (propaganda of the deed), second, the narrative to justify their violence, and third, the messages outlining how the group intends to achieve its goals.[36] The idea that terrorism is used to communicate and persuade is widely accepted.[37] It is also widely accepted that terrorists use narratives to elicit support and change perceptions.[38] They attempt to gain awareness for their groups and causes to elicit critical material support required for their success. The greater the exposure and brand awareness achieved, the greater likelihood material support will increase.[39] Unfortunately, due to the secretive nature of these groups, there is no accurate measure or database of the material resources of terrorist groups, only a wide range of estimations by

35 Bob, *The Marketing of Rebellion: Insurgents, Media, and International Activism.*

36 Wilkinson and Barclay, The Language of Jihad: Narrative Responses and Strategies of Al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula and UK Responses : Baines and O'Shaughnessy, Al-Qaeda Messaging Evolution and Positioning, 1998–2008: *Propaganda Analysis Revisited*: 163–191 .

37 James McClennon, "Terrorism as Persuasion: Possibilities and Trends," *Sociological Focus* 21, no. 1 (1988): 53–66. B. Richards, "Terrorism and Public Relations," *Public Relations Review* 30, no. 2 (2004): 169–176.

38 P. R. Neumann, "Joining Al Qaeda: Jihadist Recruitment in Europe," *Adelphi Paper* 48, no. 399 (2008): 1–71. Mark Stout, Jessica M. Huckabey and John R. Schindler, The Terrorist Perspectives Project : Strategic and Operational Views of Al Qaida and Associated Movements (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2008).

39 Bob, *The Marketing of Rebellion: Insurgents, Media, and International Activism,* 2–8.

intelligence professionals. Therefore, this research is limited to the measure of brand exposure over time.

Branding is inherently symbolic.[40] Terrorism is inherently symbolic.[41] However, there has been little analysis done on terrorist groups from the perspective of brand management.[42] Most terrorist groups utilize branding elements, such as brand names, logos, symbolism, slogans, characters, spokespeople, or positioning strategies to differentiate themselves from competitors. The brand name and logo are the most common of these elements.[43] The principles of branding appear in the activities of terrorist groups, propaganda pamphlets, video watermarks, and jihadi websites.[44] This research focuses solely on the brand name of a terrorist group as the main brand element mentioned during media coverage.

Insurgent and terrorist groups have carefully selected symbolic icons and logos to evoke specific meaning and emotions intended for target audiences. These elements represent acts of communication that brand the identity of the group.[45] Brand strategies are deliberate measures intended to increase the value of the brand for the various stakeholders and assist the group in achieving its objectives. At the outset, terrorist groups seeking international support use marketing principles to elevate the international *awareness* of their groups and their causes above other groups fighting conflicts around

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40 Keller, *Strategic Brand Management: Building, Measuring, and Managing Brand Equity*. 3,16,23,155-157, 352–253. Klink, Creating Brand Names with Meaning: The use of Sound Symbolism, 5–20. Henderson, Cote, Guidelines for Selecting Or Modifying Logos, 14–30: Henderson, Geise and Cote, Impression Management using Typeface Design, 60–72.

41 Matusitz, *Symbolism in Terrorism: Motivation, Communication, and Behavior* : Gordon H. McCormick and Frank Giordano, "Things Come Together: Symbolic Violence and Guerrilla Mobilisation," *Third World Quarterly* 28, no. 2 (March 2007):295–320. doi:10.1080/01436590601153705. McCormick, Terrorist Decision Making, 473–507: Bruce Hoffman and Gordon H. McCormick, "Terrorism, Signaling, and Suicide Attack," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 27, no. 4 (2004): 243–281. doi:10.1080/10576100490466498.

42 Matusitz, *Symbolism in Terrorism: Motivation, Communication, and Behavior*.

43 For a complete encyclopedia of insurgent logos and symbology, see, Artur Beifuss and Francesco Trivini Bellini, *Branding Terror: The Logotypes and Iconography of Insurgent Groups and Terrorist Organizations* (London ; New York: Merrell, 2013). See also Matusitz, *Symbolism in Terrorism: Motivation, Communication, and Behavior*, 171.

44 Baines and O'Shaughnessy, Al-Qaeda Messaging Evolution and Positioning, 1998–2008. Propaganda Analysis Revisited, 163–191

45 Matusitz, *Symbolism in Terrorism: Motivation, Communication, and Behavior*.

the globe. They enter the global fight for the scarce resources that support terrorist activities. Communications that elicit support are directed toward potential state sponsors, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and transnational advocacy (TNA) networks. These three types of supporting stakeholders can supply the groups with material resources—not to mention valuable international exposure—that are unavailable domestically.[46]

According to McCormick, the purpose of terrorism is to signal the intentions and "determination to use violence to achieve political objectives."[47]As McCormick's definition suggests, terrorism is the employment of violent actions for the purposes of changing the perception of the audience over particular issues.[48] P. Karber has suggested a model whereby "as a symbolic act, terrorism can be analyzed much like other media of communication, consisting of four basic components: transmitter (the terrorist), intended recipient (target), message (bombing, ambush) and feedback (reaction of target audience)."[49] It is essential for the intended recipient to symbolize the broader target audience. When the victim represents the broader audience, then the fear instilled in the broader audience generates greater attention for the group. The broader audience who visualizes the act must interpret the meaning of its message. The location of the act is critical to the correct meaning, so the message becomes more salient than the physical damage it inflicts.[50]

Terrorism is often a tool used by weaker groups to achieve an objective in political bargaining and a critical tool for overcoming inertia. Terrorists must communicate their commitment and intentions while also communicating their strength. The initial goal of terrorism is to overcome the initial asymmetry of strength and information, relative to its opposition. It accomplishes this by striking symbolic targets to

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46 Bob, *The Marketing of Rebellion: Insurgents, Media, and International Activism*, 2–28

47 Hoffman and McCormick, Terrorism, Signaling, and Suicide Attack, 243–281

48 Pierre Bourdieu, "Social Space and Symbolic Power*," *Sociological Theory* 7, no. 1 (Spring89, 1989): 14–25. Matusitz, *Symbolism in Terrorism: Motivation, Communication, and Behavior* .21-23

49 P. Karber, "Urban Terrorism: Baseline Data and A Conceptual Framework," *Social Science Quarterly* 52 (1971): 527–533. 529

50 Matusitz, *Symbolism in Terrorism: Motivation, Communication, and Behavior*, 45–46

place the group on a more equal playing field. The attacks communicate determination, strength, and the potential for victory, all of which assist a group in overcoming mobilization challenges among potential supporters.[51]

The symbolism of the target selected for attack may represent many different motivations. A terrorist may choose a victim based on association, in other words, the symbolic link to the larger population intended for influence. Oftentimes, citizens are considered complicit with the actions of their state. Therefore, the citizens as victims are symbolic of the enemy state as a whole. By attacking the citizen, the group symbolically sends a message to the population and government of that nation. For example, the massacre of the Israeli athletes during the 1972 Munich Olympics by the Palestinian terrorist group Black September was an effort to coerce the state of Israel into complying with the political objectives of the group.[52]

In addition, by measuring brand exposure, this research seeks to submit terrorist brand exposure as one element to measure Brigitte Nacos' theory of mass mediated terrorism. Nacos explains, "Terrorists calculate the consequences of their deeds, the likelihood of gaining media attention, and most importantly, the likelihood of gaining entrance—through the media" to what she calls the triangle of political communication.[53] She further explains that the goals of terrorists include gaining attention and awareness for their groups' causes and motives, the respect and sympathy of those who they claim to represent, and the status of legitimate political actors.[54]

The target audience must understand the message of the terrorist. Terrorists seek to instill an abundance of fear in the target audience, thereby resulting in a substantial increase in attention. When fear and attention elevate the group above all others, terrorists

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51 Hoffman and McCormick, Terrorism, Signaling, and Suicide Attack, 243–281

52 Matusitz, *Symbolism in Terrorism: Motivation, Communication, and Behavior,* 46

53 Brigitte L. Nacos, *Mass-Mediated Terrorism: The Central Role of the Media in Terrorism and Counterterrorism,* 2nd ed. (Latham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers., 2007). 15. Brigitte L. Nacos, *Mass-Mediated Terrorism* (Latham, Maryland: Rowan & Littlefield Publishers., 2002).

54 Nacos, *Mass-Mediated Terrorism: The Central Role of the Media in Terrorism and Counterterrorism,* 20–24

achieve mass-mediated terrorism. The goal of mass-mediated terrorism is over-saturation of media coverage of a terrorist act. Gabriel Weimann asserts that

> media-wise terrorists plan their actions with the media as a major consideration. They select targets, location, and timing according to media preferences, trying to satisfy the media criteria for newsworthiness, media timetables and deadlines, and media access. They prepare visual aids for the media, such as video clips of their actions, taped interviews and declarations of the perpetrators, films, press releases, and video news releases.[55]

Therefore, the intent of terrorist groups is to achieve greater awareness and support, reaching the pinnacle at mass-mediated terrorism. Symbolic targets generate greater news coverage of the event and indirectly elevate the perpetrator to celebrity status.

Al Qaeda's 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City is considered the gold standard for mass-mediated terrorism. The World Trade Center was chosen as a symbol of Western wealth, global capitalism, power, heritage, and modernity, as well as the heart of American culture.[56] As a result, the media has been more attuned to terrorism and more likely to cover Al Qaeda.[57]

Al Qaeda was successful in setting the public agenda for Americans after the 9/11 attacks as surveys and polls revealed that nearly 100 percent of Americans had followed the events in the media. Al Qaeda's brand became a household name to much of the world. The salience of terrorism and the message of Al Qaeda became the primary topic of discussion, more so than at any time in the organization's past. The media investigated the organization's grievances to determine the motive behind the attacks. In an effort to bring clarity to their subscribers, the media aired messages from Al Qaeda and covered Islamic issues in far greater detail and length than ever before.[58] Osama bin Laden was elevated to hero status by some Arab news outlets as a result of the attention gained by

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55 Gabriel Weimann, "The Psychology of Mass-Mediated Terrorism," *American Behavioral Scientist* 52, no. 1 (2008):69–86. doi:10.1177/0002764208321342. 74

56 Brigitte L. Nacos, "The Terrorist Calculus Behind 9–11: A Model for Future Terrorism?" *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 26, no. 1 (2003): 1. doi:10.1080/10576100390145134.

57 Matusitz, *Symbolism in Terrorism: Motivation, Communication, and Behavior*, 47

58 Nacos, The Terrorist Calculus Behind 9–11: A Model for Future Terrorism?, 1 : For further discussion of this problem, see Weimann, The Psychology of Mass-Mediated Terrorism, 69–86

the attacks. His legitimacy among Muslims across the globe increased as the media talked about him more often than many of the world's most influential leaders.[59]

1. The Al Qaeda Brand

Al-Qaeda, literally translated in English as "the base" or "foundation," seeks as a brand to position itself as the foundation and leader of all Islamic jihadist movements.[60] The original name of the group was "Qa'eda Al-Jihad" but was shortened by the public.[61] The Al Qaeda positioning strategy is to differentiate it from all other Islamic jihadi groups as the leader and global Islamic jihad organizer.[62] Al Qaeda has always aimed at toppling the near enemy of Arab regimes it deemed puppets of the West and those who are not true followers of Islam; however, Osama bin Laden's vision consistently focused on the far enemy in the United States and Europe as opposed to direct involvement in revolution or civil war.[63]

Al-Qaeda's positioning as the foundation for global jihad established an inherent need to franchise the brand name to jihadi groups worldwide.[64] Al Qaeda had extended its brand name to other organizations in the past, including a united group of Sunni insurgents under the banner of Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), but it later revoked the brand name. In a letter to Ayman Al Zawahiri, Osama bin Laden voiced "his concern that

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59 Weimann, The Psychology of Mass-Mediated Terrorism, 69–86

60 Bradley McAllister and Alex P. Schmid, "Theories of Terrorism," in *The Routledge Handbook of Terrorism Research*, ed. Alex P. Schmid (London, United Kingdom: Routledge, 2011), 201. Giles Foden, "What Is the Origin of the Name Al-Qaida?" *The Guardian.* August 24, 2002.

61 Don Rassler et al., "Letters from Abbottabad: Bin Ladin Sidelined?" (West Point, NY: Harmony Program, Counter Terrorism Center, 2012). Osama Bin Laden, Open Letter from Osama Bin Laden Concerned about Al-Qaida's Image because the Name Al-Qaida Lacks Religious Overtones, the U.S. is Able to Wage War Against the Group without Offending all Muslims. (West Point, NY: Center for Counterterrorism, 2011).: Foden, What is the Origin of the Name Al-Qaida?

62 McAllister and Schmid, Theories of Terrorism, 201: Rassler et al., Letters from Abbottabad: Bin Ladin Sidelined? : Bin Laden, Open Letter from Osama Bin Laden Concerned about Al-Qaida's Image because the Name Al-Qaida Lacks Religious Overtones, the U.S. is Able to Wage War Against the Group without Offending all Muslims.

63 Jarret M. Brachman and William F. McCants, "Stealing Al Qaeda's Playbook," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 29, no. 4 (2006): 309–321. doi:10.1080/10576100600634605.

64 Baines and O'Shaughnessy, Al-Qaeda Messaging Evolution and Positioning, 1998–2008. Propaganda Analysis Revisited, 163–191. Randy Borum and Michael Gelles, "Al-Qaeda's Operational Evolution: Behavioral and Organizational Perspectives," *Behavioral Sciences & the Law* 23, no. 4 (2005): 467–483. doi:10.1002/bsl.645.

attacks that had left Muslims dead … especially in Iraq … had harmed Al Qaeda's image."[65] Bin Laden believed that the persistent negative actions by AQI would devalue the Al Qaeda brand.[66] Though some scholars debate whether the franchising strategy has been successful, empirical evidence suggests the core group of Al Qaeda has experienced a net loss.[67] In a letter recovered from Bin Laden's home, the late Al-Qaeda leader expressed his concern over the image and brand name of Al Qaeda and pondered changing the name to counter what he felt was the brand's devaluation.[68] Bin Laden was also frustrated with the shortening of the name, which he thought severed the ties of the group to Islamic crusaders, devalued the narrative, and conceded to Western messages that intentionally disassociated Islam with the war on terror.[69]Al Qaeda was in a brand crisis that forced its senior leaders to deliberate over a rebranding strategy to reposition the group's image in the minds of the public.

Al Qaeda has communicated its positioning strategy through a variety of techniques. Al Qaeda has leveraged the Internet and mass communications in ways no other groups, until the Islamic State, have managed in the past.[70] Al Qaeda's effective use of propaganda is a clear means to expand its support base.[71] Al Qaeda develops high

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65 Agence France-Presse, "Osama Bin Laden Believed in Image, and Considered Al Qaeda Name Change to Improve 'brand,'" *Al Arabiya News*, June 25, 2011.

66 For information Al Qaeda's franchising, see Daniel Byman, "Buddies Or Burdens? Understanding the Al Qaeda Relationship with its Affiliate Organizations," *Security Studies* 23, no. 3 (2014): 431–470. doi:10.1080/09636412.2014.935228.For information on Al Qaeda revoking their brand name from AQI, see Stephen Biddle, Jeffrey Friedman and Jacob Shapiro, "Testing the Surge: Why Did Violence Decline in Iraq in 2007?" *International Security* 37, no. 1 (2012): 7–40. Gartenstein-Ross et al., The War between the Islamic State and Al-Qaeda: Strategic Dimensions of a Patricidal Conflict

67 Byman, Buddies Or Burdens? Understanding the Al Qaeda Relationship with its Affiliate Organizations, 431–470

68 Jason Burke, "Osama Bin Laden Considered Rebranding Al-Qaida, Documents Reveal," The Guardian. May 3, 2012.

69 Rassler et al., Letters from Abbottabad: Bin Ladin Sidelined? For further discussion of this problem, see Bin Laden, Open Letter from Osama Bin Laden Concerned about Al-Qaida's Image because the Name Al-Qaida Lacks Religious Overtones, the U.S. is Able to Wage War Against the Group without Offending all Muslims.

70 Baines and O'Shaughnessy, Al-Qaeda Messaging Evolution and Positioning, 1998–2008: *Propaganda Analysis Revisited*, 163–191. Baines et al., The Dark Side of Political Marketing: Islamist Propaganda, Reversal Theory and British Muslims, 478–495. J. Magnet, "His Grasp of Spin is Chilling," *The Daily Telegraph*: November 16, 2001.

71 Hoffman, Bruce. 2011." The Future of Al-Qaeda": First Session: Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade. Committee on Foreign Affairs. U.S. House of Representatives. 2011 .

quality jihadist propaganda in the form of videos that effectively communicate the brand through three production organizations: al-Fajr Media Centre, the Global Islamic Media Front, and as-Sahab Institute for Media Production.[72]

Al Qaeda has a history of indirect involvement in internal conflicts of nations, such as Afghanistan, Yemen, Mali, Nigeria—and in Syria through its affiliate, Al Nusra.[73] However, Al Qaeda has provided indirect support in the forms of resources and fighters as opposed to heavy involvement to conquer territory. Al Qaeda seems more adept at gaining local allies to ensure safe havens in ungoverned spaces. These locations facilitate terrorist training camps and provide fighters with valuable combat experience following their training.[74]

Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) has been more active in the civil war in Yemen than any other franchise. Reuters reports that AQAP now governs the port city of Mukalla in southeastern Yemen. The group exacts tolls on import ships, which net the group millions to support its operations and enrich senior leaders. Figures range from $2 million to $5 million a day.[75] The key difference between the acquisition of the territory in Syria and Iraq by the Islamic State and land acquisitions in Yemen by AQAP is that the territories in Yemen were largely undefended. AQAP seized these areas when the opportunity presented itself whereas the Islamic State defeated military units in both Iraq and Syria to seize territory.[76]

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72 Daniel Kimmage, "The Al-Qaeda Media Nexus : The Virtual Network Behind the Global Message" (Washington, DC: Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 2008). As referenced in: Baines and O'Shaughnessy, Al-Qaeda Messaging Evolution and Positioning, 1998–2008. Propaganda Analysis Revisited, 163–191

73 Vahid Brown, "Classical and Global Jihad: Al-Qa'ida's Franchising Frustrations," in *Fault Lines in the Global Jihad: Organizational, Strategic, and Ideological Fissures*, eds. Assaf Moghadem and Brian Fishman (New York: Routledge, 2011): 100–115. For further discussion of this problem, see Anne Stenersen et al., *Self- Inflicted Wounds: Debates and Divisions Within Al-Qa'Ida's and Its Periphery*, eds. Assaf Moghadam and Brian Fishman (West Point, NY: Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, 2010). Byman, Buddies Or Burdens? Understanding the Al Qaeda Relationship with its Affiliate Organizations, 431–470. Leah Farrall, "How Al Qaeda Works: What the Organizations Subsidiaries Say about its Strength," *Foreign Affairs* 90, no. 2 (March/April 2011): 128–138.

74 Stenersen et al., *Self- Inflicted Wounds: Debates and Divisions Within Al-Qa'Ida's and Its Periphery*

76 Bayoumy, Browning and Ghobari, "How Saudi Arabia's War In Yemen Has Made Al Qaeda Stronger – and Richer." http://www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/yemen-aqap/

2. The Islamic State

While the Islamic State learned its branding strategies from Al-Qaeda, utilizing a brand name and logo, it positioned itself as the Islamic caliphate. The Islamic State has also expanded territorially by merely extending its brand to splinter groups of the Taliban in Afghanistan, Libya, and Pakistan.[77] The Islamic State has distributed propaganda pamphlets with its distinctive logo, which, according to the *Times of India*, includes the "historical stamp of Prophet Muhammad and a Kalashnikov assault rifle."[78] By using historic Islamic symbols of Muhamad's caliphate, it is attempting to place itself in the position of the modern caliphate in the minds of Muslims.

The Islamic State initially began as a confederation of numerous small Sunni insurgent groups in Iraq that later merged under one umbrella franchise as Al Qaeda in Iraq, the main objective, to expel coalition forces and gain control of Iraq. In total, the group has re-branded and changed positioning strategies five times. The former names include the Mujahideen Shura Council, Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI), the Islamic State of Iraq and Levant (ISIL), and the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS).[79] Each name change signified a need to re-brand the group and communicate a strategic shift. However, this research seeks to demonstrate the difficulty the Islamic State had in separating its brand of terrorism from its former parent group, Al Qaeda. Open-source reporting suggests the brand names of the two groups were interwoven as late as June 2014—that is, until the leader of the Islamic State, Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi, declared for the second time an Islamic Caliphate.[80]

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77 Vernie Liebl," An Islamic Caliphate is the political system and official state of Islam.". Vernie Liebl, "The Caliphate," *Middle Eastern Studies* 45, no. 3 (2009):373–391. doi:10.1080/00263200902853355. Najib Sharifi, "ISIS Makes Inroads in Afghanistan, Pakistan," *Foreign Policy*, October 1, 2014. Rivka Azoulay, "Islamic State Franchising: Tribes, Transnational Jihadi Networks and Generational Shifts" (Netherlands: Netherlands Institute of International Relations Clingendael, 2015).

78 Staff Article, "ISIS Trying to Expand its Influence in Pakistan, Distributes Pamphlets," The Times of India, Sep 3, 2014.

79 Byman, Buddies Or Burdens? Understanding the Al Qaeda Relationship with its Affiliate Organizations, 431–470

80 Jessica D. Lewis, "Al-Qaeda in Iraq Resurgent" (Washington, DC: The Institute for the Study of War, 2013). James M. Dubik, "How the U.S. can Help Iraq in its Fight Against Al-Qaeda," *Washington Post*, June 10, 2014. https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/how-the-us-can-help-iraq-in-its-fight-against-al-qaeda/2014/01/10/d2567902-7975-11e3-b1c5-739e63e9c9a7_story.html

The Islamic State has revolutionized how terrorist groups connect with stakeholders utilizing social media—mainly Twitter—to send messages and propaganda. The Islamic State publishes an estimated 90,000 Tweets per day and amassed roughly 46,000 Twitter followers.[81] This is an unprecedented achievement in jihadist propaganda. The group has managed to expand its brand in the cyber arena, reaching its target audience through one-to-one connections of its members with young Muslim men and women who support its cause via social media.[82]

The Islamic State uses digital magazines, websites, and smartphone apps extensively. The group has websites associated with the smart-phone apps whereby the group sells clothing to Western recruits with cryptic Islamic State, and "jihad cool" phrases.[83] This is a potential branding strategy for merging "terrorism chic" with "Islamic chic," which appropriates Islamic symbols for fashion.[84] The Islamic State's deliberate and strategic use of creative and even mainstream marketing techniques suggests that the organization pays close attention to its brand and strategizes about expanding it into the international market.

The one key difference between the Islamic State's brand strategy and Al Qaeda's is the capture of population centers, which adds to the size of the caliphate. The leader of Al Qaeda, Osama bin Laden, spoke often about a future Caliphate but stopped short of assuming his own authority to do so.[85] Islamic State leader Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi felt no such restraint. On June 29, 2014, he anointed himself the Caliph, declared all conquered

81 J. M. Berger and Jonathon Morgan, "The ISIS Twitter Census: Defining and Describing the Population of ISIS Supporters on Twitter." Washington DC: The Brookings Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World Analysis Paper, 2015.

82 Katherine Leggiero, "Countering ISIS Recruitment in Western Nations," *Journal of Political Risk* 3, no. 1 (2015).

83 Helle Dale, "How these Terrorists are using Twitter to Grow," *The Daily Signal*, August 18, 2014.

84 Matusitz, *Symbolism in Terrorism: Motivation, Communication, and Behavior*, 250

85 Borum and Gelles, Al-Qaeda's Operational Evolution: Behavioral and Organizational Perspectives, 467–483. For further discussion of this problem, see Gartenstein-Ross et al., The War between the Islamic State and Al-Qaeda: Strategic Dimensions of a Patricidal Conflict

territory as the Islamic Caliphate, and re-branded the group the Islamic State.[86] The Islamic State has been the first Islamic terrorist group to use overwhelming military force to seize land and capture major population centers. In the process, Islamic State fighters have embarrassed Iraqi and Syrian military forces, showing the world they are extremely capable of military conquest.[87]

Defeating significant portions of the Iraqi and Syrian militaries so rapidly garnered enormous brand credibility and authenticity. The Islamic State backed up numerous promises made over the years that they would establish a caliphate. The Islamic State captured major cities in Syria, such as Raqqa and the ancient city of Palmyra, large oil fields, and major rural provinces. They defeated some security forces of the Assad regime. In 2013, the group conquered the western Iraqi city of Fallujah. In 2014, the group captured the third largest city of Mosul, as well as Ramadi and Tikrit.[88] The Islamic State's rapid seizures of population centers have positioned the groups as potential victors in the region. Osama bin Laden once stated, "When people see a strong horse and a weak horse, by nature they will like the strong horse."[89] In 2014 and 2015, media coverage deemed the Islamic State's brand as the potential winning horse in the fight against the Iraqi regime.

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86 Carmon, Yehoshua and Leone, Understanding Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi and the Phenomenon of the Islamic Caliphate State: For further discussion of this problem, see Gartenstein-Ross et al., The War between the Islamic State and Al-Qaeda: Strategic Dimensions of a Patricidal Conflict

87 Barak Barfi, "The Military Doctrine of the Islamic State and the Limits of Ba'athist Influence," *CTC Sentinel* 9, no. 2 (2016): 18–23.

88 For detailed maps of the Islamic State territorial gains, over time, visit the Institute for the Study of War's "ISIS Sanctuary Map" http://www.understandingwar.org/project/isis-sanctuary-map See also: Liz Sly, "How the Battle Against the Islamic State is Redrawing the Map of the Middle East," *Washington Post*, December 30, 2015. https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/on-the-front-lines-of-the-war-against-the-islamic-state-a-tangled-web/2015/12/30/d944925a-9244-11e5-befa-99ceebcbb272_story.html ; For a timeline of Islamic State major events, see The Wilson Center, "Timeline: Rise and Spread of the Islamic State" (Washington, DC: The Wilson Center, 2016). https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/timeline-rise-and-spread-the-islamic-state

89 John Kenney, "No One Ever Said it Better," *The New Yorker*, July 12, 2010 . http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2010/07/12/no-one-ever-said-it-better;

The Islamic State came within a few miles of Baghdad. This proximity threatened the capital, the center of gravity, and symbolic city of Iraq.[90] Renowned military strategist Carl von Clausewitz developed the concept of a center of gravity defined as "the hub of all power and movement, on which everything depends. That is the point against which all our energies are directed."[91] Joseph Strange defines center of gravity as "the primary source of moral or physical strength, power, and resistance."[92] The capital city is one center of gravity for a nation. Baghdad is considered the center of gravity for the Iraqi government. Losing the capital city to the Islamic State would logically precede the loss of the country. Despite the Islamic State's successful and influential information campaigns, the most decisive brand strategy was its ability to conquer territory and follow through on its promise of a caliphate. No number of information campaigns could match the picture of the Islamic State flag raised over the capital of an Iraqi province and threatening Baghdad. This thesis hypothesizes that the Islamic State's rapid and successful military conquests were the primary event that propelled the Islamic State into the realm of mass mediated terrorism.

C. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, understanding the brands and brand exposure of terrorist groups may provide a different prism through which to analyze armed groups and offer insight into their identity, objectives, strategy, and vulnerabilities. Other broad frameworks to analyze terrorist groups may gloss over these aspects. Armed groups deliberately utilize brand elements to ensure the public understands their message.

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90 For detailed maps of the Islamic State territorial gains, over time, visit the Institute for the Study of War's "ISIS Sanctuary Map" http://www.understandingwar.org/project/isis-sanctuary-map : For further discussion of this problem, see Liz Sly, "How the Battle Against the Islamic State is Redrawing the Map of the Middle East," *Washington Post*, December 30, 2015. https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/on-the-front-lines-of-the-war-against-the-islamic-state-a-tangled-web/2015/12/30/d944925a-9244-11e5-befa-99ceebcbb272_story.html ; For a timeline of Islamic State major events, see The Wilson Center, Timeline: Rise and Spread of the Islamic State (Washington, DC: The Wilson Center,[2016]). https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/timeline-rise-and-spread-the-islamic-state

91 Carl von Clausewitz, Michael Howard and Peter Paret, *On War* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2006). 596

92 Joseph Strange, "Centers of Gravity & Critical Vulnerabilities: Building a Clausewitian Foundation so that we can all Speak the Same Language," *Perspectives on Warfighting* 4, no. 2 (1996).

Symbolism is a critical element of terrorism. Analyzing the target as a symbol helps the recipient decode the terrorists' message. Terrorist groups intend to influence political issues by leveling the playing field and striking symbolic targets. At a minimum, the acts communicate the terrorist group's motivations, intentions, and resolve. They deliberately use symbolic targeting to manipulate media coverage. Gaining the attention of the media allows groups to spread their messages further and faster. Black September's massacre of Israeli Olympians and Al Qaeda's attacks on 9/11 were highly successful examples of symbolic targeting that garnered international attention through the media. The more attention a group gains, the more likely the group will receive support for its cause and future operations. By striking symbolic targets, terrorist groups increase the likelihood their brand exposure and material support will increase.

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III. HYPOTHESES AND METHODOLOGY

A. HYPOTHESES AND METHODOLOGY

This thesis seeks to demonstrate that terrorist groups can manipulate their brand exposure by conducting terrorist operations and, thus, strategically manage operations to keep their brand exposure high. This research seeks to answer three main hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: Attacks by a given terrorist group will lead to an increase in that group's brand exposure.

Hypothesis 2: Attacks that achieve territorial gains near population centers will be associated with an increase in brand exposure.

Hypothesis 3: Following the declaration of the caliphate, there will be less association between the Islamic State and the brand exposure of Al Qaeda.

B. METHODOLOGY AND DATA

Quantitative analysis of political science has been hampered by inefficient methods and overwhelming data that researchers have had to manually sort and code. The global propagation of the Internet has compounded the problem by increasing the quantity of data that has needed to be analyzed. Since the turn of the 21st century, statistical research in the political science field has made tremendous strides forward with automated coding through sophisticated data-collection methods. This automated technology capability to data-mines thousands of news sources on the Internet.. Researchers now have the ability to extract large volumes of data with algorithms that scour the Internet for search terms. Complex algorithms analyze text to categorize data sources, such as digital newspaper articles, by scanning for key-word combinations including names, locations, and specific action verbs such as "killed" or "detonated." The automated systems provide researchers a greater capacity to mathematically explain social phenomena.[93]

93 Justin Grimmer and Brandon M. Stewart, "Text as Data: The Promise and Pitfalls of Automatic Content Analysis Methods for Political Texts," *Political Analysis* 21, no. 3 (July 01, 2013): 267–297. doi:10.1093/pan/mps028.

Currently, the largest event data-collection projects are the Global Database of Events, Language, and Tone (GDELT) and Lockheed Martin's Integrated Crisis Early Warning System (ICEWS), a Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency–funded project.[94] The GDELT project tracks the world's broadcast, print, and web news and identifies people, locations, and organizations, aggregate counts of data, news sources, and emotions. This database has provided researchers a new method for logging and coding individual conflict events sorted by specific groups. GDELT's translational platform provides the most extensive real-time news machine to translate over 65 languages. GDELT has coded news data using the Conflict and Mediation Events Observations (CAMEO) taxonomy, a proven categorization of more than 300 event types.[95]

One of GDELT's sub-databases, the Global Knowledge Graph (GKG), uses a highly sophisticated algorithm to query news sources and extract a contextual description of conflicts. The theory behind the GKG is to provide a near–real time understanding of the global conversation.[96] The database specifically counts how many times states, organizations, or people are mentioned over a given period. The GKG accounts for the number of times a terrorist organization is mentioned over a specific time, thus providing a measure of the dependent variable, brand exposure. Data from the GKG is only available for dates after April 1, 2013. The period for this research spans April 1, 2013 to December 31, 2015, which represents 1,000 days of observations. The ICEWS performs similar analysis; however, it cannot measure brand exposure at this time. ICEWS is

94 Michael D. Ward et al., "Comparing GDELT and ICEWS Event Data," *Analysis* 21 (2013): 267–297.

95 www.gdeltproject.org . For a copy of the CAMEO code book, see: Philip A. Schrodt and Omur Yilmaz, CAMEO: Conflict and Mediation Event Observations Codebook (Lawrence, KA: Center for International Political Analysis: Institute for Policy and Social Research: University of Kansas, 2007). To see a discussion on the history or conflict databases and coding for big data queries, see Philip A. Schrodt and David Van Brackle, "Automated Coding of Political Event Data," in *Handbook of Computational Approaches to Counterterrorism*, ed. V. S. Subrahmanian (New York: Springer Science CBusiness Media, 2013): 23–49. Haewoon Kwak and Jisun An, "A First Look at Global News Coverage of Disasters by using the GDELT Dataset." *Lecture Notes in Computer Science* (Including Subseries Lecture Notes in Artificial Intelligence and Lecture Notes in Bioinformatics). 8851 (2014): 300–308.

96 Global Database of Events, Language, and Tone (GDELT). Global Knowledge Graph (GKG), Accessed January 4, 2016, http://gdeltproject.org/.

designed specifically to search for and record conflict events. It focuses on logging conflict events and applies a "de-duplication" process that stops short of tracking how many times the media mentions a specific event or the actors involved.[97]

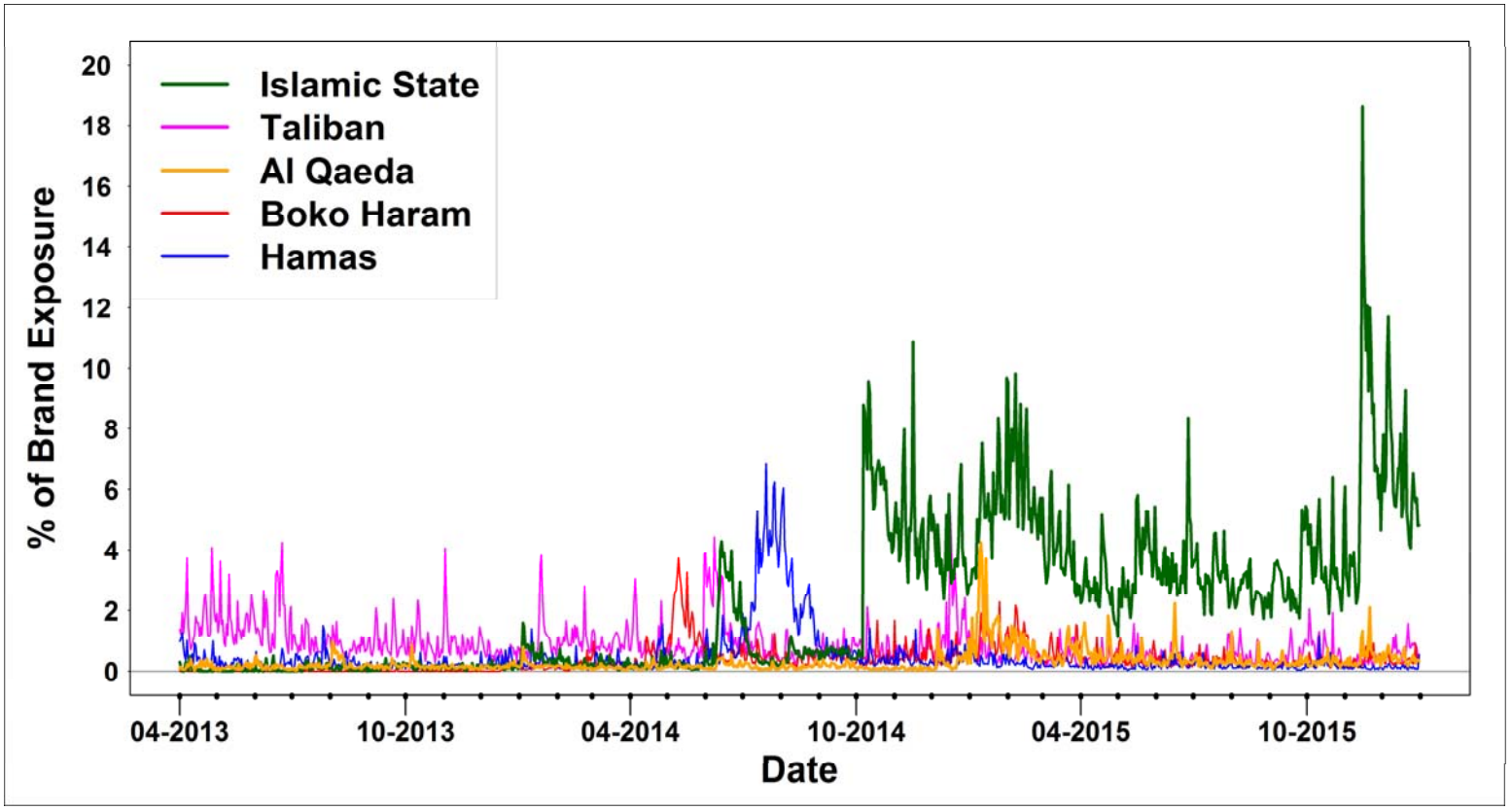
To sort by brand name, this thesis filtered the GKG database for all coded terrorist organizations, which resulted in roughly 2,400 returned results across the globe for all terrorist groups. The results included many name variations for the same group, which were manually combined and summed to provide a cumulative brand exposure over the 1,000-day period. The top five highest returns for brand exposure in order from greatest to least were as follows: the Islamic State, the Taliban, Al Qaeda, Boko Haram, and Hamas (see Figure 2). This thesis is specifically focused on analyzing Al Qaeda and the Islamic State because the Islamic State is a former franchise of Al Qaeda's, and the groups are currently in direct competition.

1. Dependent Variable

The unit of measure for the dependent variable, brand exposure, is one article that mentions the brand name of a terrorist group in a 24-hour time span. The total number of articles in one day is then divided by the total number of news articles across all subjects in the same 24-hour period, thereby making brand exposure a percentage of the global news market-share. The percentage is important because the denominator is always the function of the day's total news articles and, therefore, accounts for variations in the data. The primary dependent variable in this research is the level of the terrorist group's brand exposure each day.

97 Ward et al., Comparing GDELT and ICEWS Event Data, 267–297

Figure 2. The Brand Exposure of Al Qaeda and the Islamic State



This figure is of the top five groups the brand exposure with the highest brand exposure and provides a relative comparison of Al Qaeda and the Islamic State. The dramatic rise in the Islamic State may be lost without the relative comparison to other groups of the same caliber of attention.[98]

98 This figure was created using the Global Database of Events, Language, and Tone (GDELT), Global Knowledge Graph (GKG).

The naming conventions for some groups posed a challenge because the media confused who perpetrated the events. Al Qaeda has franchised several groups over the course of the last two decades and often times those groups use Al Qaeda's name within theirs. For example, the Islamic State, a different group now, was a franchise of Al Qaeda with a brand name "Al Qaeda in Iraq." This poses a challenge for the dependent variable accounting for a change in name, or attributing the source of an event to one brand name when in reality it was another. The brand name of a group is the primary differentiator within the GKG database. However, for the purposes of the dependent variable, differentiating between the specific group, Al Qaeda or the Islamic State, was irrelevant. In this case, if the Islamic State was the real source of the event, but the media attributed the event to Al Qaeda, then Al Qaeda essentially benefits from the media's ignorance. The failure falls on the Islamic State for to differentiate the brand from Al Qaeda. For independent variables, the attribution is not a problem. In places human coders inaccurately labeled the source of an event as Al Qaeda in Iraq due to a slow transition in coding names, when the group in question is in reality the Islamic State, the actual name of the group was manually corrected in the database.

2. Independent Variables

The independent variable of terrorist attacks was measured using the Political Instability Task Force (PITF)'s Worldwide Atrocities Dataset. This dataset is funded by the Central Intelligence Agency and, according to their website, "is a global dataset that describes, in quantitative terms, the deliberate killing of non-combatant civilians in the context of a wider political conflict."[99] Its methodology uses news sources collected from the Internet combined with manipulation by conventional human coders. PITF aligns with this thesis in that the dependent variable is automated by an algorithm and not independently verified by a human coder but the independent variable of attacks and death counts are coded by humans. According to the PITF codebook, the dataset measures "the deliberate use of lethal violence against non-combatant civilians by actors engaged in a wider political or military conflict."[100] The effective

99 Political Instability Task Force. "Worldwide Atrocities Dataset," Accessed March 3, 2016, http://eventdata.parusanalytics.com/data.dir/atrocities.html

100 Political Instability Task Force. "Worldwide Atrocities Dataset," Accessed March 3, 2016,

dates of this dataset span January 1, 1995 through December 31, 2015. This was the only dataset available through the end of 2015, which at the time, provided the only means to measure attacks. The dataset has a limitation in that events in Syria are not recorded due to the complicated task of accurately attributing the source of attack to the correct group. Although this was a severe limitation in terms of individual attacks, other methods for counting hostages and land advances within Syria were available, as discussed in the following subsections. When the PITF data was filtered against the timeframe of the GDELT's GKG, there were roughly 3,750 observations across the globe. The number of attacks attributed to the chosen terrorist group sample totaled roughly 300 events.

The database on Islamic State land advances was manually created using open source material to collect the date of the land advance, the city name, and country. The Islamic State is the only terrorist group who continually gains territory for the purposes of occupation. It has overrun government facilities, military bases, large cities such as Mosul, Iraq, and threatened the capital cities of Baghdad and Damascus. The population of the city prior to the capture does not factor into the calculations during this research.

This research also attributes lone wolf terrorist attacks to the group whom the attacker swore allegiance. This is because the tactics of terrorists have changed and often call on Muslims to strike out against Western nations. Therefore, groups essentially benefit from the media exposure of lone wolf attacks, which cost the group nothing to generate. An increase in brand exposure as the result of a lone wolf attack would validate this strategy.

3. Control Variables

During the course of the research, the graphical depictions of the PITF data presented a gap in accounting for potential factors that influence brand exposure. Because the PITF codes for terrorist attacks during which a minimum of five civilians are killed, the kidnapping, release, or execution of individual hostages is excluded. To fix this gap, we employed the database of Western hostages from 2001 to 2015 created by the Combatting Terrorism Center (CTC) at West Point.[101] Using the United Nations definition, the analysts define a hostage as "a person detained

101 Combating Terrorism Center (CTC) at West Point. Held Hostage: Analyses of Kidnapping Across Time and Jihadist Organizations., accessed March 10, 2016, https://s3.amazonaws.com/com-ter-cen/hostages/index.html.

and under the threat of death, injury, or continued detention by an individual or group in order to compel a third party to do (or abstain from doing) any act as an explicit or implicit condition of the person's release."[102] The data is limited to Westerners because the collection method uses open source data, which are extremely limited and often non-existent for non-Western citizens who are kidnapped inside their own countries by terrorist groups. For example, the lack of media access to denied areas in Iraq and Syria make accurate and comprehensive accounts of native Syrian and Iraqi citizens virtually impossible. There are some accounts, but it is impossible to know for certain that news coverage includes every host-national kidnapped. These events happen so often and occur simultaneously with other larger attacks; therefore, they often fail to meet the threshold for reporting by local and international media sources.

The CTC hostage data include Westerners kidnapped and held inside Syria.[103] The critical information for the CTC hostage database includes the nationality of the victims, the country where they were kidnapped, the group that kidnapped them, and the result of their kidnapping. Western hostages account for 275 hostage operations conducted by jihadist organizations over the 1,000-day period in this research. Examples of the results of a kidnapping include execution, release, death in captivity, or death during the rescue attempt.

To define and measure the differences between autocratic and democratic countries, the Polity V dataset, which is maintained by the Center for Systemic Peace, was accessed. The Polity Project tracks the transitions from autocratic to democratic regimes across the globe. The Polity Project is highly respected and widely used for coding and the authority characteristics of nation states in quantitative research. The polity scores are on a 21-point scale, from -10 for autocracies and +10 for democracies.[104] This data provided the ability to filter countries, by democracy or autocracy, where terrorist attacks were conducted by the Islamic State or Al Qaeda. This research used democracies with scores greater than 6.

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102 Seth Loertscher and Daniel Milton, "Held Hostage: Analysis of Kidnappings Across Time and among Jihadist Organizations" (New York: The Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, The United States Military Academy, 2015).

103 Ibid.

104 Monty G. Marshall, Ted Robert Gurr and Keith Jaggers, Polity™ IV Project: Political Regime Characteristics and Transitions, 1800–2012 -Dataset Users' Manual (Virginia: Center for Systemic Peace, 2013).

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IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The concept of terrorist brand exposure suggests that terrorist groups may execute actions that cause an increase or decrease in their brand exposure. Because terrorist groups use violence to communicate, the analysis for three hypotheses tests the effectiveness of violence on the brand exposure of the Islamic State and Al Qaeda. This chapter provides justification and methods used in the binomial regression models, followed by a discussion of the results.

The Islamic State conducted a higher number of events that happened relatively close together. The Islamic State conducted terrorist attacks and militarily seized population centers before and after which many events happened in rapid succession. The data suggest that when large-scale terrorist attacks occur against population centers, the city is captured, and then the group consolidates control over the population. When the Islamic State has consolidated control, it has often executed civilian hostages, journalists, and government officials. To analyze the capture of population centers by the Islamic State, the regressions controlled for other actions that would increase the group's brand exposure.

The binomial regressions controlled for attacks and various hostage operations conducted by the Islamic State, Al Qaeda, and all other groups. There were 64 Al Qaeda events and 228 Islamic State events between April 1, 2013 and December 31, 2015. In both regression models, a two-day lag controlled for the possibility that the same variable had occurred within the previous two days.[105] The models were intended to be predictive based on events that occurred in the past. Therefore, the variable is represented as "Today," and the lagged variable is represented as the "Last two days" (see Tables 1 and 2). Both models represent the predictive value, so the output would read as follows:

"If this variable occurred today, controlling for the previous 2 days, then… ."

Figures 3 and 4 provide a visualization of key statements relevant to the results and all independent variables conducted by the groups. These figures provide visualizations of the independent variables over time with the corresponding level of brand exposure.

105 Other lags included 3,4,7, and 14 day lags. In all cases, the AIC was lowest, and therefore the most predictive with the 2 day lag.

The results of these analyses are presented in Table 1 and Table 2. In Table 1, the dependent variable is the brand exposure of the Islamic State while in Table 2, the dependent variable is the brand exposure of Al Qaeda. The model created for the Islamic State, as presented in Table 1—which differs from Al Qaeda's model presented in Table 2—was able to distinguish between greater types of events because the Islamic State had a greater frequency and diversity of attacks. The Islamic State regression in Table 1 tested for the group's capture of population centers, attacks in democratic countries, and hostage operations. The model controlled for Islamic State actions, its attacks with death tolls of greater than 100 and 400, as well as hostage operations and terrorist events by all terrorist groups.

Al Qaeda's model in Table 2 controlled for fewer events as the group conducted 64 attacks of less diversity than the Islamic State. Figure 4 provides a visualization of the key events between April 1, 2013, and December 31, 2015. The model tested for Al Qaeda's attacks in democracies, its hostage operations, and all terrorism-related events. Unlike the Islamic State whose numbers often exceeded 100, Al Qaeda conducted zero attacks that killed more than 100 people. The model controlled for the following variables: hostages operations, all hostage events, and all terrorist events.

Table 1. Islamic State's Brand Exposure

	Dependent variable:
	Islamic State's Brand Exposure
Islamic State Capture of Population Center (Today)	0.029*** (0.007)
Islamic State Capture of Population Center (Last 2 days)	0.125*** (0.005)
Islamic State Attack on Democracy (Today)	0.150*** (0.005)
Islamic State Attack on Democracy (Last 2 days)	0.164*** (0.004)
Islamic State Hostage Event (Today)	-0.328*** (0.008)
Islamic State Hostage Event (Last 2 days)	-0.518*** (0.006)
Islamic State Attack That Kills >100 (Today)	0.124*** (0.008)
Islamic State Attack That Kills >100 (Last 2 days)	0.219*** (0.006)
Islamic State Attack That Kills >400 (Today)	-0.510*** (0.047)
Islamic State Attack That Kills >400 (Last 2 days)	-0.204*** (0.029)
Terrorist Attack on Democracy by Any Group (Today)	-0.087*** (0.002)
Terrorist Attack on Democracy by Any Group (Last 2 days)	-0.025*** (0.002)
All Hostage Events by Any Group (Today)	0.053*** (0.004)
All Hostage Events by Any Group (Last 2 days)	-0.102*** (0.003)
All Terrorist Events (Today)	0.040*** (0.002)
All Terrorist Events (Last 2 days)	-0.061*** (0.003)
Islamic State's Brand Exposure (Last 2 days)	25.524*** (0.020)
Constant	-4.411*** (0.003)
Observations	1,003
Log Likelihood	-277,447.100
Akaike Inf. Crit.	554,930.200
Note:	*p **p ***p<0.01

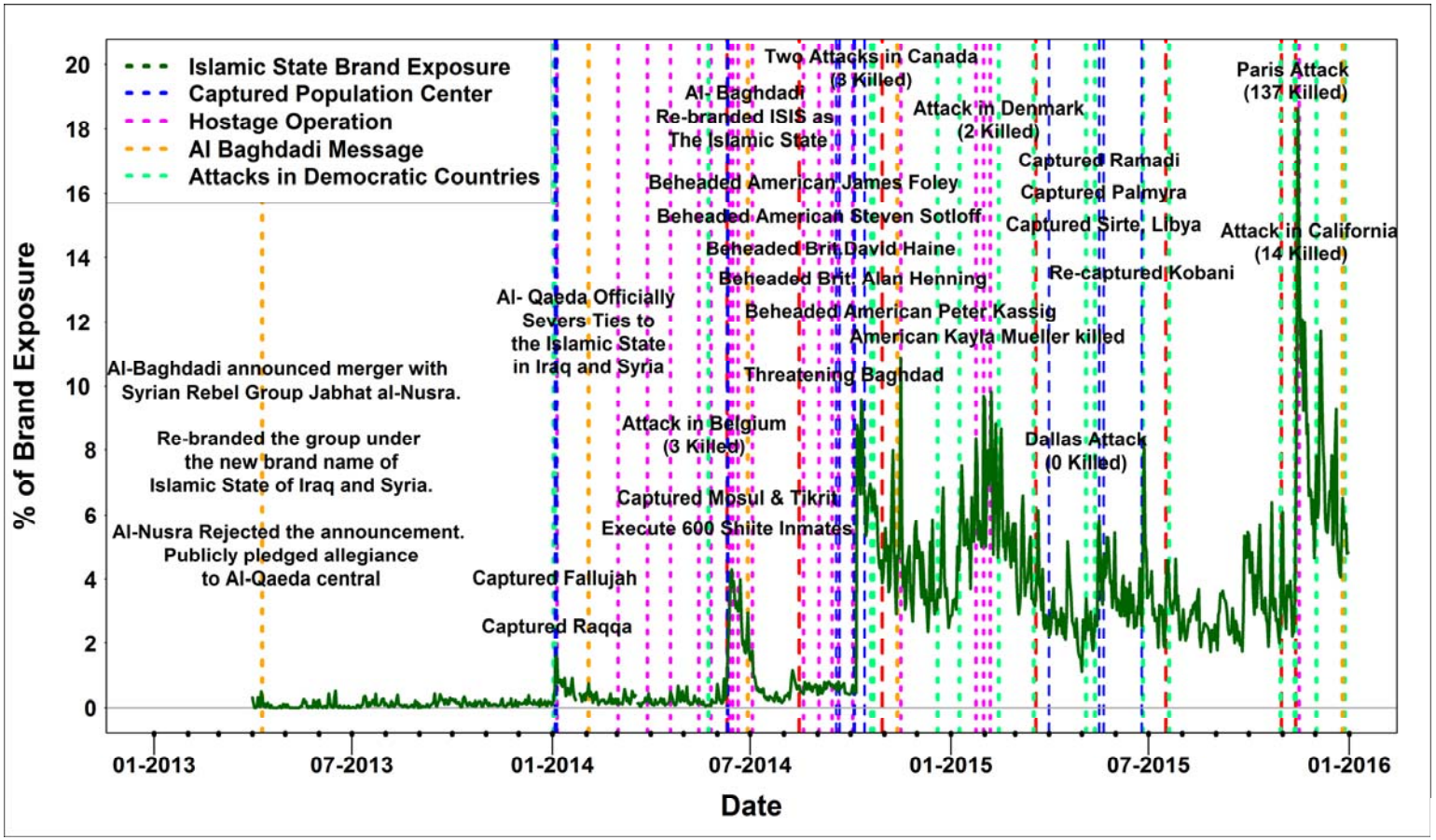
The author created Table 1 using the following data sources: Global Database of Events, Language, and Tone (GDELT), Global Knowledge Graph (GKG): Political Instability Task Force. "Worldwide Atrocities Dataset": Held Hostage: Analyses of Kidnapping Across Time and Jihadist Organizations. Combating Terrorism Center (CTC) at West Point.

Table 2. Al Qaeda's Brand Exposure

	Dependent variable:
	Al Qaeda's Brand Exposure
Al Qaeda Attack on Democracy (Today)	0.493*** (0.020)
Al Qaeda Attack on Democracy (Last 2 days)	-1.572*** (0.018)
Al Qaeda Hostage Event (Today)	0.141*** (0.018)
Al Qaeda Hostage Event (Last 2 days)	0.259*** (0.014)
Terrorist Attack on Democracy by Any Group (Today)	-0.112*** (0.006)
Terrorist Attack on Democracy by Any Group (Last 2 days)	-0.013*** (0.005)
All Hostage Events by Any Group (Today)	0.092*** (0.010)
All Hostage Events by Any Group (Last 2 days)	-0.093*** (0.008)
All Terrorist Events (Today)	-0.059*** (0.005)
All Terrorist Events (Last 2 days)	-0.049*** (0.009)
Al Qaeda's Brand Exposure (Last 2 days)	129.024*** (0.302)
Constant	-6.096*** (0.008)
Observations	1,003
Log Likelihood	-39,946.080
Akaike Inf. Crit.	79,916.160
Note:	*p **p ***p<0.01

The author created Table 2 using the following data sources: Global Database of Events, Language, and Tone (GDELT), Global Knowledge Graph (GKG): Political Instability Task Force. "Worldwide Atrocities Dataset.": Held Hostage: Analyses of Kidnapping Across Time and Jihadist Organizations. Combating Terrorism Center (CTC) at West Point.

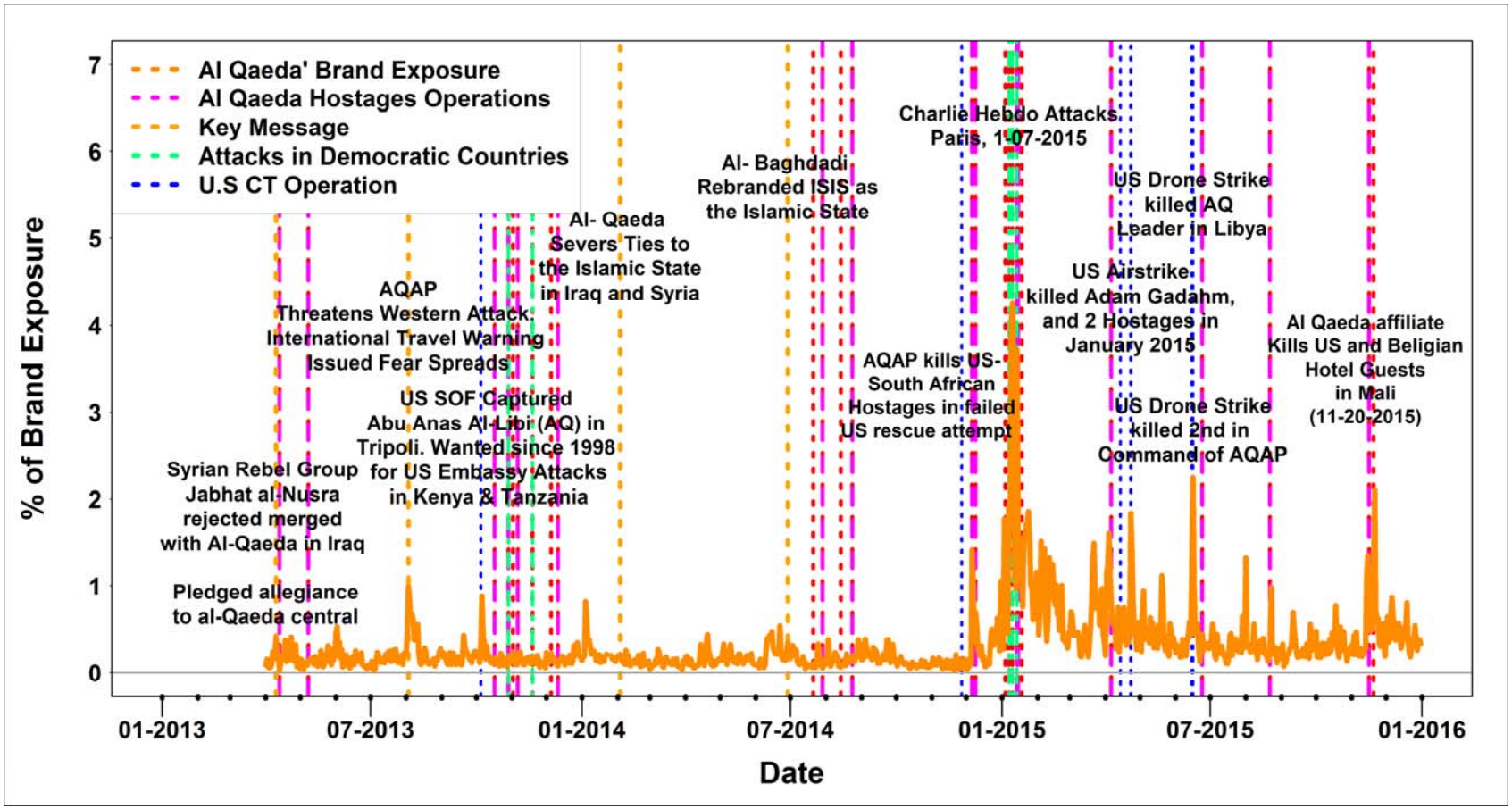
Figure 3. The Islamic State's Brand Exposure



The Islamic State Brand Exposure with key statements relevant to the results and all independent variables.[106]

106 The author created this figure using the following data sources: Global Database of Events, Language, and Tone (GDELT), Global Knowledge Graph (GKG): Political Instability Task Force. "Worldwide Atrocities Dataset.": Held Hostage: Analyses of Kidnapping Across Time and Jihadist Organizations. Combating Terrorism Center (CTC) at West Point.

Figure 4. Al Qaeda's Brand Exposure



Al Qaeda's Brand Exposure with key statements and all independent variables.[107]

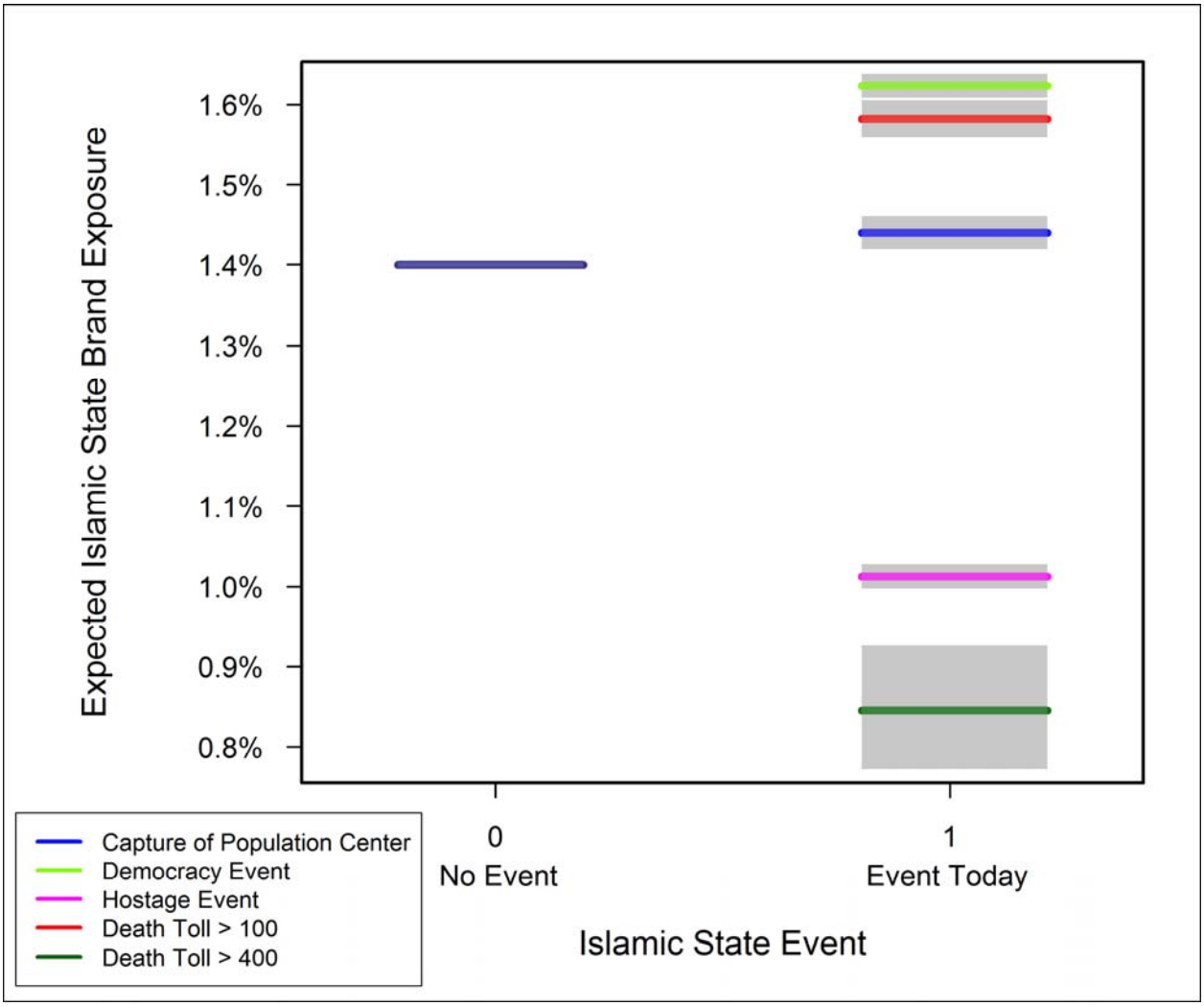
107 The author created this figure using the following data sources: Global Database of Events, Language, and Tone (GDELT), Global Knowledge Graph (GKG): Political Instability Task Force. "Worldwide Atrocities Dataset.": Held Hostage: Analyses of Kidnapping Across Time and Jihadist Organizations. Combating Terrorism Center (CTC) at West Point.

Hypothesis 1: Attacks by a given terrorist group lead to an increase in that group's brand exposure.

There are significant ($p < 0.01$) positive coefficients for different types of terrorist attacks by both groups. The data suggests that the Islamic State and Al Qaeda can increase their brand exposure by comitting violence, which rejects the null hypothesis and allows us to accept hypothesis 1. Attacks in democractic countries produced a significant ($p < 0.01$) positive coefficient, suggesting that attacking these countries generates an increase in brand exposure (see Figures 5 and 6). For Al Qaeda, the result indicates not only that attacks in democratic countries generate increases in brand exposure but also that they generate a greater increase in brand expose than other types of attacks. Perhaps this provides one explanation for Al Qaeda's loss of brand dominance to the Islamic State: the group's low frequency of attacks on democratic countries.

Terrorists groups have changed strategies away from training terrorists in remote locations, infiltrating them abroad, and then procuring material means for an attack. Now, jihadi terrorist groups call on Muslims around the world to procure materials locally, choose targets, and conduct lone-wolf attacks within their host countries. This lone-wolf strategy appears to work so long as the perpetrator claims affiliation with the group, and the attack occurs in a democratic country. Whether the attack itself succeeds or fails is irrelevant to the group. The current strategy expends little resources to motivate individuals, and the return on investment appears to be exponentially greater than the old strategy. A few examples of lone-wolf attacks include the attack at Fort Hood, Texas, that killed 13 U.S. Soldiers; the attack on the Muhammad drawing-competition in Dallas, Texas, which resulted in the death of only the perpetrator; and the attack in San Bernardino, California, that killed 14 civilians.

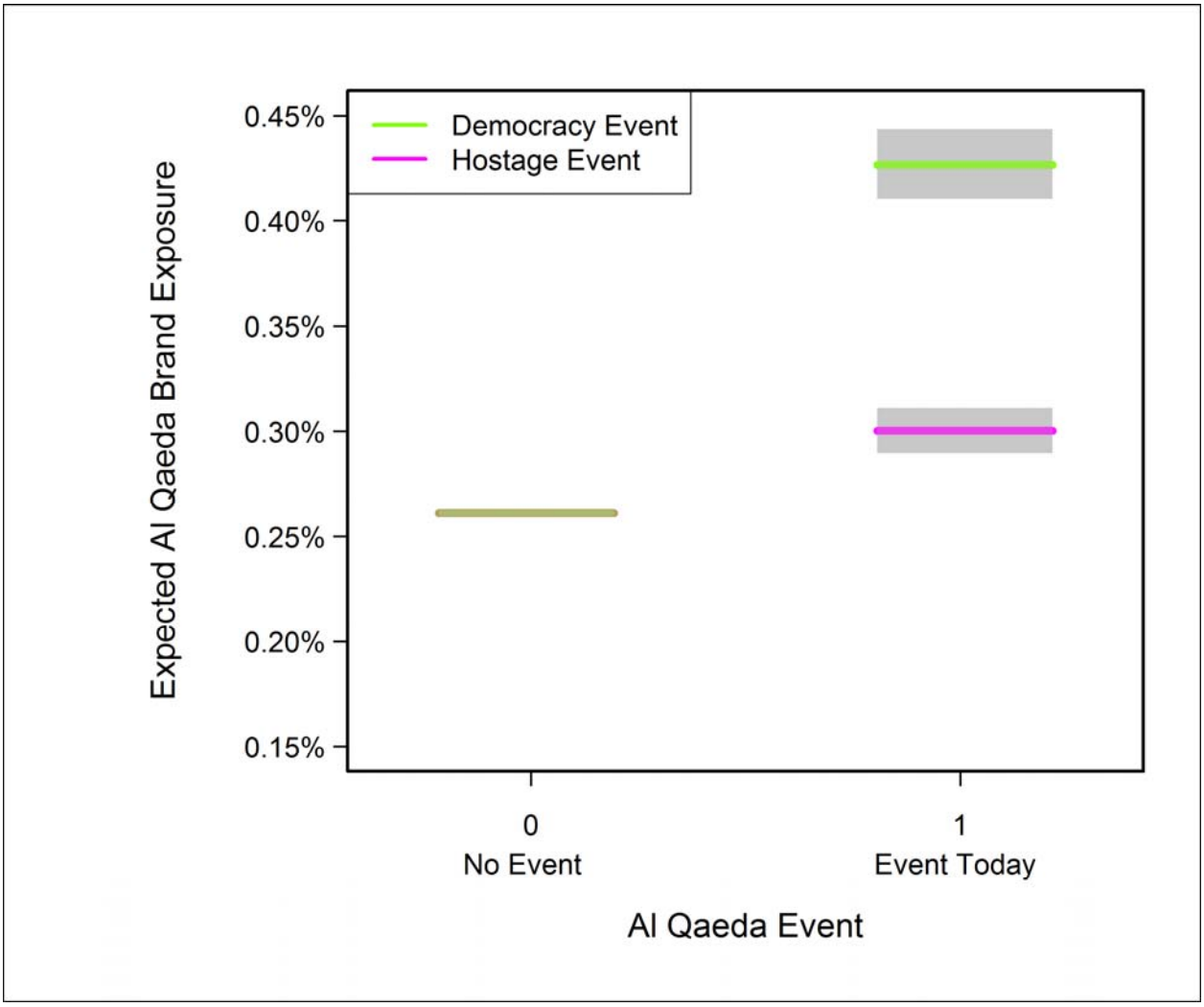
Figure 5. The Proportion of the Islamic State Brand Exposure When Attacks Occur



The lines show the expected levels of brand exposure, given the presence or absence of an attack in a given country, with all other variables held constant at their means. The gray bands show 95% confidence intervals for the expected values.[108]

108 The author created this figure using the following data sources: Global Database of Events, Language, and Tone (GDELT), Global Knowledge Graph (GKG): Political Instability Task Force. "Worldwide Atrocities Dataset.": Held Hostage: Analyses of Kidnapping Across Time and Jihadist Organizations. Combating Terrorism Center (CTC) at West Point.

Figure 6. The Proportional of Al Qaeda's Brand Exposure When Attacks Occur



The lines show the expected levels of brand exposure, given the presence or absence of an attack in a given country, with all other variables held constant at their means. The gray bands show 95% confidence intervals for the expected values[109]

109 The author created this figure using the following data sources: Global Database of Events, Language, and Tone (GDELT), Global Knowledge Graph (GKG): Political Instability Task Force. "Worldwide Atrocities Dataset.": Held Hostage: Analyses of Kidnapping Across Time and Jihadist Organizations. Combating Terrorism Center (CTC) at West Point.

Counter-intuitively, both groups' hostage operations produced significant ($p < 0.01$) negative coefficients, suggesting that those operations do not generate an increase in brand exposure (see Figures 5 and 6). Unsurprisingly, Islamic State attacks of which the death toll was greater than 100 generated an increased brand exposure as there was a significant ($p < 0.01$) positive coeficient (see Figure 5). Terrorist attacks of which the death toll was greater than 100 were also a high predictor of brand exposure. This explains why the Islamic State's Paris attacks in November 2015 generated almost 18 percent of all new coverage. The attacks killed 137 civilians in one of the most recognizable democratic capitals in the world. This was not the first terrorist attack in Europe, nor was it the highest death toll. This attack far exceeded the media coverage of the Charlie Hebdo attacks in Paris in January 2015. That attack killed 12, and many suspected the perpetrator was the Islamic State until Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula claimed responsibility six days later. However, counter-intuitevly, attacks of which the death toll was greater than 400 had a significant ($p < 0.01$) negative coeficient, suggesting a decrease in brand exposure. (see Figure 5).

Hypothesis 2: Attacks that achieve territorial gains near population centers correspond with an increase in brand exposure.

There is a significant ($p < 0.01$) positive coefficient that correlates the capture of a population center by the Islamic State to an increase in its brand exposure, rejecting the null hypothesis and allowing us to accept Hypothesis 2.[110] The Islamic State has differentiated itself from all other groups by declaring a caliphate, backing up its promises, and conquering territory by defeating the military forces of Syria and Iraq. The Islamic State's rapid defeat of both military forces and, then, its advance close to the capital city of Baghdad seem to have played a significant role in reaching the pinnacle of mass-mediated terrorism and differentiating its brand from all other terrorist groups.

Hypothesis 3: Following Islamic State's declaration of a caliphate, there is less of an association between the brand exposures of the Islamic State and Al Qaeda.

110 As a robustness check, lags for 3, 7, and 14 days indicate similar results. In each case the level of predictive success was higher for the 2-day lag.

Al Qaeda appears to have unique trends in that its brand name is often associated with other groups. Due to the group's positioning strategy as the umbrella—or self-proclaimed base—of Islamic terrorism since the early 1990s, it has franchised different affiliates across the globe. Therefore, when the news media references a franchise, there is a high likelihood Al Qaeda is also mentioned. For example, Abu Sayyaf in the Southern Philippine Islands was an Al Qaeda affiliate from the early 1990s until 2014, so the odds are high that Al Qaeda is mentioned in news articles discussing Abu Sayyaf.[111]

The Islamic State was once called Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI). Though the name of the brand changed from AQI to the Islamic State of Iraq sometime around 2009, the data suggests the news media did not make that transition smoothly. As shown in Figures 3 and 4, Al Qaeda's brand exposure had increased along with the Islamic State's brand exposure until Al Qaeda formally announced it had severed the relationship on February 3, 2014. A simple Google news search for the first week of January 2014 reveals confusion in the media as to whether Al Qaeda or the Islamic State captured the Syrian city of Raqqa. After February 3, 2014, the trend decreases slightly, but Al Qaeda's brand exposure continued to increase along with the Islamic State's. This is likely because the earlier brand names of the Islamic State in Iraq (ISI) and the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) were not particularly well known outside of foreign policy or terrorism experts. This is an indication that the Islamic State had not properly differentiated its brand from Al Qaeda's. This closeness of the two brand exposures appears significantly lower after the Islamic State captured Mosul, the leader Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi proclaimed a caliphate, and the group rebranded itself simply the Islamic State. The linkage between the Islamic State and Al Qaeda seems to decrease significantly. Unfortunately for the Islamic State, it appears that the two groups may always be associated to a lesser degree. The trend suggests that even though the groups are current rivals, the media's discussion of one group seems to trigger a discussion of the other.

111 Rohan Gunaratna, *Inside Al-Qaeda: Global Network of Terror* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002): xvii-xxiv

The results of these analyses are presented in Table 3. For all models in Table 3, the dependent variable is the brand exposure of the Islamic State. To test hypothesis 3, model one analyzed the closeness of the brand exposures of the Islamic State and Al Qaeda before the declaration of the caliphate, between January 1, 2014 and June 30, 2014. Model two analyzed the closeness after the declaration of the caliphate between June 30, 2014 and December 31, 2015. As an additional test, model three analyzed the closeness between January 1, 2015 and June 30, 2015. The models controlled for attacks by the Islamic State and Al Qaeda, their brand exposure, as well as attacks by all terrorist groups.

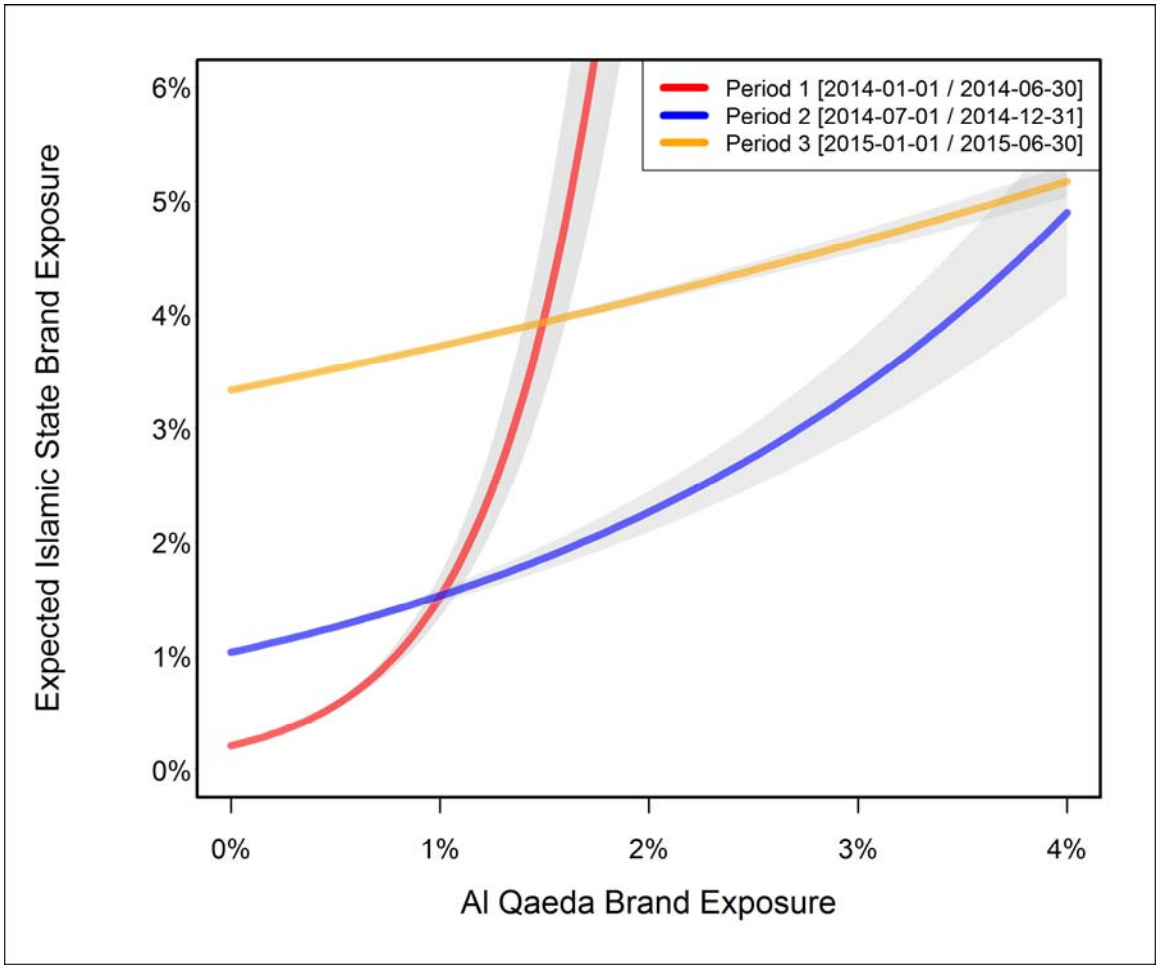
Figure 7 is the graphical depiction of the closeness in the relationship between the Islamic State's and Al Qaeda's brand names over the three periods. With each increase in Al Qaeda's brand exposure there is a subsequent increase in the Islamic State's brand exposure. The slope of the lines represents the degree of closeness between the brand names. The greater the slopes of the line, the closer the association of the brand names.

Table 3. Islamic State Brand Name Connection to the Al Qaeda Brand Name

	Islamic State's Brand Exposure		
	[2014-01-01 / 2014–06-30]	[2014-07-01 / 2014–12-31]	[2015-01-01 / 2015–06-30]
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Al Qaeda's Brand Exposure	197.927***	39.891***	11.426***
	(7.415)	(2.201)	(0.431)
Islamic State Attack	0.158***	0.115***	0.108***
	(0.014)	(0.006)	(0.004)
Islamic State Attack (Last 2 days)	-0.018	-0.226***	-0.059***
	(0.014)	(0.005)	(0.003)
All Events	0.156***	-0.101***	0.011***
	(0.017)	(0.006)	(0.003)
All Events (Last 2 days)	-0.136**	0.233***	-0.032***
	(0.055)	(0.012)	(0.006)
Al Qaeda's Brand Exposure (Last 2 days)	-96.613***	-8.915***	-11.197***
	(9.043)	(2.626)	(0.484)
Islamic State's Brand Exposure (Last 2 days)	75.474***	35.106***	23.762***
	(0.428)	(0.073)	(0.067)
Constant	-6.215***	-5.043***	-4.181***
	(0.053)	(0.012)	(0.006)
Observations	180	184	181
Log Likelihood	-5,246.923	-22,513.800	-11,949.560
Akaike Inf. Crit.	10,509.850	45,043.610	23,915.110
Note:			*p **p ***p<0.01

The author created Table 3 using the following data sources: Global Database of Events, Language, and Tone (GDELT), Global Knowledge Graph (GKG): Political Instability Task Force. "Worldwide Atrocities Dataset.": Held Hostage: Analyses of Kidnapping Across Time and Jihadist Organizations. Combating Terrorism Center (CTC) at West Point.

Figure 7. Islamic State Brand Name Connection to the Al Qaeda Brand Name



The lines show the expected levels of brand exposure, given the presence or absence of attacks by either group, with all other variables held constant at their means. The gray bands show 95% confidence intervals for the expected values.[112]

112 The author created this figure using the following data sources: Global Database of Events, Language, and Tone (GDELT), Global Knowledge Graph (GKG): Political Instability Task Force. "Worldwide Atrocities Dataset.": Held Hostage: Analyses of Kidnapping Across Time and Jihadist Organizations. Combating Terrorism Center (CTC) at West Point.

The results suggest that the Islamic State has sometimes struggled to differentiate its brand from its former Al-Qaeda headquarters. Period 1, prior to Al Qaeda officially severing ties shows a greater, statistically significant ($p < 0.01$), positive coefficient. The substantial increase in Al Qaeda's brand exposure coefficient in model 3—following the announcement of the Islamic State severing ties with Al Qaeda—suggests that though the media failed to differentiate between the two groups prior to this split, the distinction between the two groups sparked conversation. Essentially, by announcing the split, Al Qaeda bonded the two brand names. For the Islamic State brand, this is a continuation of the differentiation problem. Although Al Qaeda had little to no contributions, it continued to maintain dominance between the two brand names and benefitted from the success of the Islamic State's operations. The significant ($p < 0.01$) positive coefficient in model 3 shows a dramatic rise compared to the two previous models, suggesting the problem of differentiating the two brand names became worse, not better, after the split.

The Islamic State seemed to make a deliberate effort to separate its brand from Al Qaeda's once and for all on June 29, 2014. During a rare public appearance in the recently conquered city of Mosul, Abu Bakr Al Baghdadi declared an Islamic caliphate. Figure 3 appears to show a dramatic uptick in attacks by the Islamic State after the declaration of the caliphate. The declaration as well as the increase in the frequency and severity of attacks appears to have alleviated the problem for the Islamic State, as the significant ($p < 0.01$) positive coefficients decrease over time in relation to the previous models. This result suggests that the closeness of the two brand names decreases over the latter two periods. The results suggest that we can reject the null hypothesis and accept Hypothesis 3. The deliberate move to declare the caliphate successfully differentiated the brand name of the Islamic State from Al Qaeda.

In conclusion, the results of this thesis validate the concept that terrorist groups can manage their brands by the types of terrorist strategies they choose. Terrorist groups that want to increase awareness among the international media must conduct attacks in democratic countries to generate the greatest increase in brand exposure. The Islamic State was a franchise of Al Qaeda's, and as a result, the two groups' brand names are forever linked. When the Islamic State differentiated itself as a group, it struggled to

separate its brand from Al Qaeda's and was hampered in the level of international support it could generate. The Islamic State had to change strategies. By conquering large population centers and declaring a caliphate, the group eventually increased its brand exposure enough to differentiate its brand name from Al Qaeda's.

V. FUTURE RESEARCH

Areas for future research of brand exposure are unlimited. There are many terrorist groups and many types of symbolic terrorism that have not been covered in this thesis. Opportunities to test variables based on symbolic differentiation include areas such as cultural terrorism and terrorism against people with Western versus non-Western citizenship. All are interesting research projects to test the bounds of terrorist brand exposure and to measure the effectiveness of terrorist strategies.

One interesting research question could ask whether an increase in a terrorist group's brand exposure correlates with a subsequent increase in the rate of foreign fighters to the group. Currently, there is no comprehensive international database of foreign fighters available to the public. However, if a database were created in the future, this would be an interesting research project. This potential study might hypothesize that a dramatic increase in the average brand exposure of a terrorist group correlates with a subsequent increase in the flow of foreign fighters to the group.

Another interesting study would be on the geographical visualization of a group's brand exposure by news sources at the national level. The analysis could reveal which media sources in which countries provide coverage of each group's attacks. If a group conducts an attack in North Africa, for example, this study might hypothesize there is a greater increase in brand exposure in North Africa and Europe than in the United States. Such a differentiation may signal the interest level of policy makers in certain terrorist groups based on geography and a nation's history in that region.

The brand exposure measurement may be the first step toward future quantitative analysis of a terrorist group's brand awareness and, ultimately, its brand equity. Brand equity measurements, or the financial value of the brand itself, could assign a quantitative number to the strength of a brand in relation to other terrorist groups and governments. Such research may explain what makes some brands stronger than others, why terrorist groups franchise, or why some groups choose to become a franchise of another group.

There are many opportunities to analyze terrorist groups through the lens of brand theory. This research analyzed only one brand element, the brand name. Terrorist groups utilize other brand elements for the purposes of communicating a symbolic message to their stakeholders. Terrorist logos are an under-researched area. Terrorist logos are visual depictions of how groups see themselves and how they want to portray their motives to stakeholders. Weapons are a common element in terrorist brand logos. A research question may ask whether there is a correlation between the size of the weapon in proportion to the overall size of the logo and a group's level of violence. Do groups with larger proportionally sized weapons in their logos behave more violently than groups with less proportionally sized weapons, or no weapons, in their logos? If there is a strong correlation, researchers could use the results of such a study to develop a predictive model of violent behavior for emerging terrorist groups, splinter groups, or re-branding efforts of existing groups.

VI. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, terrorist organizations such as Al Qaeda and the Islamic State market their brands in an effort to generate support in terms of funding and recruits, both of which ultimately increase their capacity to conduct operations. To increase the brand awareness, terrorist groups conduct violent symbolic actions to generate attention within the media. The expected increase in awareness depends on the type of action.

The findings suggest terrorist brand exposure is a valid measurement to evaluate the effectiveness of a terrorist group's strategic brand management. Brand exposure can measure the effectiveness of violent attacks, franchising, and differentiation of brand names among competing terrorist groups. The results validate the theory that terrorist groups can influence their brand exposure through violent terrorist actions. Terrorist groups can develop proper brand strategies that differentiate themselves in the competition for resources.

The findings suggest that focusing on credibility and authenticity by keeping promises and staying true to a cause is critical to a terrorist group's success. The Islamic State struggled to differentiate itself from Al Qaeda, but the group stayed true to the core tenets of establishing an Islamic caliphate, and kept its promise by capturing large population centers to increase the caliphate's territory. Its rapid defeat of Iraqi and Syrian forces brought additional credibility and reliability to the brand.

Conventional military operations that captured population centers provided a critical boost to the Islamic State's brand. The findings suggest the reverse is also likely to be true. Militarily reversing the Islamic State's territorial gains will shrink the overall size of the caliphate and force the group to break its promises of maintaining the caliphate. Losing territory will damage the Islamic State's brand credibility and remove the winning horse phenomena.

Communications strategies to counter the Islamic State are unlikely to overcome its brand strength without also re-capturing territory. Policy makers should consider a

combined arms strategy of militarily defeating the Islamic State while communicating the group's inability to prevent their losses and keep their promises.

The results were conclusive that Islamic State hostage operations do not provide the expected return on investment because those operations correlate to a decrease in the groups brand exposure. The decrease in brand exposure may explain why the group has shifted away from this strategy.

Conversely, attacks in democratic countries are the highest predictive factor in generating an increase in brand exposure. Therefore, policy makers may choose to focus greater resources and efforts to defend democracies from terrorist attacks and prevent such groups from gaining valuable global attention—thus decreases their material support for future operations. Such efforts in democratic countries, combined with efforts to build partner nations' capacities to prevent the loss of population centers, may be the best strategy to degrade a terrorist group's ability to build strong and credible brands.

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